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NEW TALES
FROM
FAERY LAND



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"They loved, too, the beautiful Iris-spirit, who came in the sun-light, and slept so gorgeously robed upon the soft bosom of the silvery spray."

Page 92.

NEW TALES
FROM FAERY LAND.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



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DEDICATION.

MY DEAR CHILDREN,

I do not know whether, when you are as old as I am, you will have the same love which I retain for the pleasant books which diverted me in the happy hours of childhood (happy hours indeed! when a fairy tale can absorb the mind, making it forget all its troubles); but believing that you will, I would fain add to your store of future as well as present gratification, and, persuaded that a new fairy tale must have fresh charms for you, I have laid aside the severer duties of life, and devoted a portion of my time to your Christmas amusement. Shall I

tell you how it fell out that I thought of this? I was staying in a beautiful and happy valley—very distant from this busy city; one of those tranquil nooks, which seem to exclude all the anxieties, and cares, of the world: the smiling fields, the wooded groves, the distant hills, all spoke of peace and happiness. One evening the sweet song of the birds, the murmuring sound of the brook at my feet, the busy hum of insects, the last rays of the setting sun, and the rapidly increasing twilight, gradually disposed my eyes to close in slumber. As I laid me down beneath a spreading beech-tree, an unspeakable calm came over me, and I slept profoundly. Was it a dream? A fairy,—a beautiful bright fairy, my dear children,—stood before me. Looking at me kindly, she said:—“It is long since we have met,—you were then a child. Has not all in your world made progress since then? And have you no curiosity to know whether we in Faëry Land have not done the same? Come and see.” She looked so lovingly at me, that, recognising in her the fairy who had given me so many happy hours in bygone days,

I joyfully assented. She waved her wand—a cloud descended. She seated me beside her and carried me off to her home in Faëry Land. How long I remained there I know not ; but I give you, in this little book, some of the tales which I learnt from her whilst there. Could you have heard them related, as I did, in her silvery tones, how you would love them ! but I have done my best for you, and give them as I recollected them when I awoke—for I did awake, stiff and cold, under my beech-tree, when it was dark, dark night. Should they please you, and should they serve to impress upon your minds the importance of those virtues which they are intended to teach, you will make happy one, who has your welfare, as well as your amusement, at heart.

Your affectionate friend,

THE AUTHOR.

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THE PEARL BLESSINGS.

I.

IN a little cottage, on the borders of a beautiful lake, there dwelt, once upon a time, a little maiden, who might be, perhaps, twelve years old. Her mother had died about a year before my story commences, leaving to her child her cottage and all that she possessed. This was not much, but it sufficed the fair girl, for her wants were few, and many of these were ministered to in a manner which she scarcely, or indeed not at all, could understand. She had loved her mother very dearly, and it was a long time before she could enjoy even the bright sunshine or the sweet flowers after her death.

Sometimes she would sit for hours upon the ledge of a rock which overhung the lake, her soft eyes raining bright tears into the brighter waters, and the sweet voice of her mourning giving to the west wind a sadder tone,—so sad, indeed, that as it passed by, the mother nursing her child drew it unconsciously to her heart, and all who loved one another looked wistfully into each other's faces and thought of death.

But by degrees the memory of her mother assumed a brighter aspect, and although she would sit upon the rock, and weep into the clear waters, and sigh with the whispering wind, her tears were no longer bitter, and her sigh had lost all but the sweetness of its sadness. She remembered all that her mother had told her, and recalled a thousand strange and beautiful songs which she had sung to her when she was too young to think if they had any meaning at all, and which now seemed in their mysterious sweetness to account for many things which before had scarcely attracted her attention.

She had been so accustomed to see Norna, the little old woman who brought her daily food, that he had never thought to inquire whence she came,

or whither she went; but one day, as she sat upon the rock looking into the water, she felt thirsty, and wished for some milk to drink. The thought had scarcely passed through her mind when the little woman stood at her side, holding some milk in a crystal cup, and offering it to her. The maiden, whose name was Ida, took the milk, and drank it gladly, giving the cup back with a smile to Norna.

The moment she had done so, a thought flashed through her mind, and she turned to speak again to the old woman; but she was nowhere to be seen. Then Ida recollected that she had hardly formed the wish before it was gratified, and one by one many strange things came into her mind, and she remembered that she had never wanted anything that the little old woman had not immediately brought her; and she thought that when she went home she would try whether this were true or not.

Now, the chief delight of Ida was to watch the sun rise and set; to see the cold grey clouds gradually becoming brighter and brighter, until they became so beautiful that her eyes would fill

with tears of joy. She loved, too, to watch the river, as it rushed over its pebbly bed, or crept, dark and silent, under the hanging woods, or fell in beautiful forms over the rock. Of the wind, too, she was very fond; and often the breezes seemed to kiss her cheek, and to whisper into her ear. Flowers were her delight. She never plucked them; but when she found any that were more lovely than the rest, or had a sweeter perfume, she would sit by them, touching them tenderly with her delicate fingers, and inhaling delightedly their fragrance.

Indeed, her mother had taught her to love all these things, so that, in all its forms, the world of nature was her chief joy. She was never tired of listening to its music, of watching its changes, or dreaming of its beauty. The birds and the insects were her familiar friends; and after her breakfast, when she went into the wood, the butterflies and the dragon-flies would come round her. From every bough the glad birds sent sweet messages of music; the gurgling waters seemed to laugh and leap as she drew near; and, except the mourning for a mother's loss, sorrow had never entered her heart until the day when she wished for the milk, and began to think of other

things than those which her mother had taught her to love.

From the moment these ideas entered her head poor Ida knew no peace ; and when she had sat all day upon the rock, forgetting the flowers and the streams, the birds and the painted flies, she returned to her little cottage quite disconsolate. She was, however, hungry, and wished for her supper, and to go to bed, for she was weary with thinking. In an instant the little old woman appeared ; the cloth, white as the driven snow, was spread ; and beautiful fruits, with sweet bread and milk, were placed before her. But Ida could not eat ; and she turned suddenly round to her strange attendant, that she might satisfy some of the doubts which agitated her. Norna was gone ! but at the end of the room she saw a beautiful amber-coloured veil, and behind it was discernible an angel, with long white wings, and soft eyes, and bright hair streaming to the feet.

Ida rose from her seat, bent forward, and put out her hand ; then lifting up the veil, she saw that it was her mother's spirit. She sank down upon her knees, clasped her hands, and gazed into her mother's face ; and the spirit motioned her to sit down on the

ground and to listen. Then upon the air there floated a sound sweeter than the voice of birds and waterfalls, and her heart heard these words :—

“ Ida, thy childhood is passed. To-day thou hast wished to know whom thou art ; and I have not power to keep the secret from thee. Oh, my child ! my child ! why wert thou not content ? To this moment I have been able to watch over thee, and to keep thee from harm. So long as thy heart was satisfied with the converse of bright nature I had taught thee to love, all was well ;—so long as thy wishes were those only of a child, from my spirit-home I could minister unto them ; now I shall only see thee once again until thy trials are passed. I may not aid thee, and must leave thee to thyself. Thy father is a potent king, not only among fairies, but among men ; and he gave me charge of thee until such time as thou shouldst wish for other things than the pleasures which I have taught thee to value. Now he will come and claim thee, and take thee to his court, and marry thee ; but, oh, Ida ! Ida ! if thou hast ever loved me, be good and true. Forget not in the court and in the palace—in the lustre and the glitter of thy life, the lake and the stream, the

music of the woods and waters, those pure loves of thy childhood—for their spirits are thy friends and my friends, and they will aid thee in thy trouble against the evil ones of the world.”

Then she bent over Ida’s head, and two bright tears fell upon her hair and became diamonds, such as were never seen before ; and she sighed, and her sigh became a veil of roseate tissue, finer than was ever wrought by human hands ; and she blessed her, and the words of her blessing became a string of pearls. Then she prayed a moment, and the prayer became a clasp of fine gold, which fastened the “ Pearl Blessings ” around her beautiful neck. And Ida covered her face with her hands, and when she looked up she was alone ; only the pearls and the gold clasp upon her throat, and the diamonds in her hair, and the soft veil upon her brow, told her that it was not a dream.

II.

THE next morning Ida rose but little refreshed, for she had dreamed strange dreams; and she did not care to look into the lily-bell to see how much dew the night had wept into it; but she went down to the water, she knew not why. Upon the shore, moored under the ledge of rock, she saw a boat, and at the helm there sat a young man, very beautiful; and Ida remembered that in her dreams she had seen his face. So she bent over the rock, and looked down into his bright eyes; and he looked up into hers; and a strange trouble came into her heart. Her breath came fast, and the blood mounted to her cheek. Then the young man held forth his hand, and told her that he had been sent by her father to take her away to the castle—that he had brought her dresses and jewels, and presents of all kinds, which he had sent to the little cottage; and he prayed her to go home quickly and array herself as became a king's daughter.

So she went in and found all as he had said. Fairy hands opened the chest and spread out the riches before her ; but she chose the simplest attire, and looking at herself for the first time in a glass, she saw in a moment that she was beautiful. Then she threw off the veil which her mother had given her, for she thought that it hid the fairness of her skin ; and she took the diamonds from her hair, thinking that she would keep them for her first ball at the palace. But there came through the casement a great wind and carried them away, and Ida thought that she heard in its moan the voice of her mother ; so she kept the "Pearl Blessings" upon her neck. For a moment she felt sad at the loss of the veil and the diamonds, but she looked once again into the glass and was satisfied.

As she was going out she saw that a storm had arisen. The wind sighed mournfully through the trees, the leaves fell thickly at her feet, the little stream over which in play she had so often leaped, was now swollen and angry, the flowers were all torn and withered, and as she turned, half frightened, to go back to the cottage, she saw it crumble away into the earth, leaving only a barren space where it had stood.

But Ida's heart was full of other thoughts ; and when she heard the voice of the prince calling her by name, she ran gaily to the water, and jumped from the ledge of rock into his arms.

I will not tell you all that befel poor Ida at her father's court. Three weeks after she arrived she was married to the prince, and soon became a very fine lady ; she forgot all that her mother had told her, and thought no longer of the things she had loved as a child. In a very short time indeed she was sadly changed, caring more for the lighted halls of the king's palace than for the bright sunshine, and preferring the voices of the young courtiers who told her how beautiful she was, to those of the birds and streams ; she decked her hair with jewels and false flowers, instead of trusting to the waves and curls left there by the west wind in its sport ; in short, you would not have known in Ida the princess, the innocent child who had longed for the milk as she sat upon the rock overhanging the lake.

Soon, however, misfortunes brought her to her senses, and she began to think again of her mother, and to pray also, constantly using the string of " Pearl

Blessings" for a rosary ; and when she did this, sweet peace came over her, and she slept like a weary child. Her dreams were once more of the streams and the flowers, and the silver lake. Her first child was a boy, very beautiful, but, alas ! quite deaf and quite dumb. Poor Ida was so miserable that for nearly a year she never lifted her head, and no smile ever played around her sweet mouth. Then a little girl was born, yet more lovely than the boy, and Ida consoled herself ; but the king her father and the prince her husband were wroth with her ; her father would not speak to her, and her husband began to neglect her.

For some time she had been very ill ; and this unkind conduct so preyed upon her mind that she was said to be dying ; and, indeed, so pale and thin she looked, that this seemed but too true. In the meantime, a great war had broken out, and all the men in the kingdom went to fight against a powerful sovereign, who had seized some of her father's servants and put them to death ; but the battle went not well, and in the dead of the night, poor Ida was aroused from her sleep by a loud noise. She started up, and found that her room was full of smoke. The army

had been beaten back ; her father and her husband killed—the palace fired !

Her first thought was for her children, and she ran quickly into the room adjoining, where, separated from her only by a curtain of fine tissue woven with silver stars, they slept in ivory cradles all studded with gold.

The whole room was in flames. Ida's heart stood still—a cold dew came upon her forehead, and her poor knees almost refused to carry her. The fire rose from the floor and writhed fearfully around her feet ; but she pressed the “ Pearl Blessings ” with her white hands, and strong in the force of a mother's love, passed unhurt through the serpent tongues of the flames, and stood beside the cradles of her children. To her surprise she saw standing at the head of each, a black figure, whose breath was lurid fire, and out of whose nostrils came dense smoke ; and with each of the black spirits struggled another spirit, bright and beautiful to look upon as a summer's morning, fresh as a rose bathed in dew : their breath was the breath of life, and subdued the fire which came from the mouth of the evil spirits, and dispersed the smoke from their nostrils ;

and the children slept peaceably, unconscious of all that was going on.

Ida rushed forward, her hand pressed firmly upon the "Pearl Blessings," and the evil spirits vanished in the air. So taking up her children, she ran, attended by the two fair spirits, through the flames, down the great staircase, and into the hall. Here she paused aghast! for it was full of armed men, savage with battle, and excited with wine; and who were draining huge flagons with boisterous mirth. She knew not what to do; the great staircase had crumbled away in the flames the moment she had reached the bottom, and the fire was close upon her. She pressed her necklace and prayed, and a glorious feeling came upon her heart; her brow cleared, her small graceful figure seemed to dilate; and then, strong in her faith and love, she passed onward. But she knew not that a meteor, one of those she had loved as a child, had come down and settled upon her forehead; so that when she walked boldly forward, the drunken soldiers thought that she was an angel, and drew back awe-stricken, leaving a broad way for her to pass through. They soon, however, recovered from their surprise, and thinking to themselves, that this must be the

queen, and the children in her arms, the heirs to the throne whom they had been ordered to slay, they ran after her, and soon gained rapidly upon her.

Now, indeed, she knew not what to do, for a broad, swift river ran before her feet, and the ruffian soldiers were close at hand. Then the memories of her childhood flashed across her mind, and she cried aloud :—

“O beautiful streams, whom once I loved so well—who told me so often the secrets of your cavern homes, and many wanderings—if I had loved ye ever, ye would have saved me now !”

And in despair she pressed her children closer to her heart ; and the little boy put his arms around her neck, and cried, for a soldier with a drawn sword was close behind them. Then Ida again pressed the “ Pearl Blessings,” and leaped boldly into the water. In a moment she was floating over the surface, upon the leaf of a gorgeous flower, like a golden sun begirt with roseate clouds, in the midst of green islets ; and Ida laid the two children down carefully on the velvet leaf, and they looked like two opals set in an emerald. Then she fell on her knees, and prayed earnestly ; and the mist fell from her eyes, and the spirit of her sweet childhood came upon her,



... and the two children down carefully upon the velvet leaf, and they looked like two opals set in an emerald."

and she knew again the language of the great river ; and in the odorous breathing of the glorious flower she felt blest and tranquil : for the stream told her it would bear her to her cottage-home, and the flower whispered hope into her ear !

As they sped down the river, leaving far behind them the bewildered soldiers, the kingfishers flitted to and fro ; and each time that they passed, they dropped from their long beaks a single grape ; and a crow flew past, and let fall an oaten cake. And Ida fed her children, and was quite happy.

They came soon to a place where the river whirled and boiled with frightful rapidity over and among the dark rocks—now white as snow, curling over the surface—now black and terrible, eddying between the narrow rifts ; and the children cried with fear. But Ida comforted them, and took them in her arms, and sat down, looking trustfully upon the troubled waters. Presently the leaf upon which they were parted from the flower, and glided quickly over the smooth water, to where the river rushed over the precipice—falling a thousand feet into the lake below ; but as they reached the very brink Ida heard the mighty voice of the cataract, and a smile brightened

her wan face, as, standing up with her children upon her bosom, the white mist rose thickly around them. Then she leant forward upon it ; and it bore her safely to the beautiful arch of the rainbow, over which she passed rapidly to the smooth waters, where four swans were sitting peacefully, wondering at each other's reflection in the still lake. When the swans saw Ida on the rainbow, they crossed their long necks, and spreading out their white wings, caught her and the children ; and plying busily their webbed feet, Ida knew that they were bearing her to the home of her infancy. And as they floated on the bosom of the lake, the west wind came softly after them, playing with the fair hair of the young children, kissing their downy cheeks, and whispering to them.

The little girl smiled sweetly, but the little boy looked sad and troubled, for he could not hear what the west wind said ; and the big tears stood in his eyes, like raindrops in the cups of two violets ! And Ida watched her children, and a deep sadness fell upon her heart ; for she saw that the little boy had begun to know that he was deaf and dumb. Ida felt that this affliction was part of her punishment for having forgotten her mother's lessons, and for having dared

to throw away the diamond tears of her mother, and the veil woven of her sighs. But the west wind could not bear to see her sad—for all the deep love of the olden time had come back between them; so he kissed her cheek softly, and whispered in her ear. Then a glorious smile came across her face; and she bent over her children, and embraced them so ardently, that they both wondered, and clapped their little hands with great joy. Soon they came in sight of the ledge of rock; and the four swans plied so vigorously their webbed feet that in a few moments they were on the shore.

III.

IDA, to her delight and joy, saw that the little cottage was precisely as she had left it, only the vine was more luxuriant, and the flowers clustered in larger masses over the porch. And taking her children, she led them into the chamber where she had slept herself when a child; and upon the table there was a white cloth, and the sweet bread and

milk. So she fed them ; and, kissing them tenderly, laid them side by side in her own little bed, and blessed them. When the sun had set, and the evening star took its place in the sky, she went into the deep woods, and in a sad and solemn mood wandered among the tangled briars, until she came to a large beech-tree, whose roots went far into the river, and whose branches spread like a dome over a round space of beautiful grass. Here it was that the fairies held council when the moon was at the full ; and Ida could not understand why, but within the woods, where formerly all Nature had so welcomed her, she now walked with difficulty and doubt. Sometimes her courage failed, and she would have retraced her steps ; but as the thought crossed her mind, the string of pearls seemed to press her fair throat. Then she prayed fervently, and with fresh vigour sped onwards.

Presently she found herself on the greensward, and in the midst of a beautiful fairy court. Now Ida had seen many magnificent things in her father's palace, yet this scene so far surpassed them all, that she half doubted her senses. Everything around her was so lovely. In the centre, on a throne made of pearl, sat the Queen of the Fairies. Over her

head was an emerald dome, and at her feet a carpet woven of fresh and fragrant flowers. All the space round about was bright with countless fire-flies and glow-worms. At her right hand stood a number of young fairies, all so exquisitely beautiful that Ida trembled and dared not advance ; but she remembered her poor dumb child, took courage, and went on.

The moment that she reached the outer ring of the turf, all the guards of the queen ran towards her, their swords, which were made of angry glances, pointed at her breast. Just as she gave herself up for lost, a thin veil, rose-coloured, and finer than was ever woven by human hands, fell before her, and Ida knew that it was the veil of sighs which her mother had left her. She felt she was protected, and advanced boldly towards the queen. Then there was a great hubbub in the air ; and the fairy guards were angry, and stamped their feet ; and flashing their swords, ran again towards her. But a nightingale came from a bush close by, and sang a song so sad and so sweet, that every sound was hushed ; and Ida knew that it was her mother's voice ! When all was silent, except the echo of her own sweet notes, the nightingale flew to the queen's side, and perching on

the arm of the pearl throne, sang a few words very softly into the queen's ear, who at once arose, and, beckoning Ida, said :—

“Tell me, fair lady, why do you come here, and what do you want?”

Then Ida knelt on the grass, and she looked like the reflection of the moon in a still sea, so fair and so pale she was, bending down on the dark soft grass. She then lifted up her voice and said :—

“O queen! hear me and listen to my prayer. I have two children most beautiful, and my son, the eldest, is the heir to a great throne, for my father was the king Athenos, whom thou knewest and who is dead; but, alas! alas! my boy is deaf and dumb, so he may never become king. This is the punishment of my sin in forgetting the lessons of my childhood; therefore, O queen! let me expiate my faults, and let the curse fall from him!”

And she spoke so earnestly, and the tears ran so brightly over her cheeks, that the queen's heart was moved, and she said :—

“Rise up, my daughter; thy prayer shall be granted. But thou must be of good courage, for those whom thou hast forgotten and offended, and who

loved thee so well in thy childhood, are the genii of the woods and the streams, the spirits of the flowers, and of the whole beauty of the world. If thou canst satisfy them I am content, and will myself place the crown upon thy son's head."

Then Ida bowed lowly and went away, and ran home quickly, though she felt exhausted and weary.

In the middle of the night the spirit of her mother stood again by her side, weeping, and said:—

"O my child! thy trials will be long and hard! But have courage, part not with thy potent string of pearls, and thou shalt accomplish all. If thou fearest, thou art lost; but if thou tremblest not, all shall be well, and thy child shall sit upon the throne of his fathers. Go to the glacier and throw thyself at the feet of the water spirit who dwells in the far Alps. For the dear ones thou leavest, tremble not; I will cherish them as I once did thee, until thou comest back."

Then Ida, breathing a mother's blessing on her children, went her way, taking good care that the pearls were firmly clasped upon her neck.

After a weary journey over the mountains, she came to a great river, and by following its course

soon arrived at the crystal gate out of which it flowed. Ida looked wonderingly at the marvellous grandeur of the mighty arch, but her mind was full only of her mission ; so she passed quickly under it, and found herself in a great cavern of clear ice. The light was very soft and of a pale green colour, but the cold was intense ; so she ran quickly to the further extremity of the cave, and regained the outer air.

Here she stood in the midst of a vast expanse of snow—mountain rising above mountain. Silence reigned around, save only the faint murmur of the river flowing deep beneath the snow at her feet. As she stood gazing, an eagle passed with a loud scream over her head ; in a moment a roar like thunder shook the air, and she saw ten thousand warriors clothed in white, upon white horses, come galloping down the side of the mountain. But Ida did not tremble, for she knew that she must see strange sights ; so she drew back a little way into the arch, and let the torrent of white horsemen pass by her into the vale.

When they had all disappeared she looked up, and, behold ! a great piece of the mountain had been torn away, and in the centre of a black rock she saw

a door, over which she read, written in golden letters, "The Palace of the Water King." She ran lightly over the snow, and knocked loudly at the portal, which instantly opened, grating with an awful sound upon its brazen hinges. Ida clasped her necklace firmly and entered.

She found herself under an enormous dome, supported by a thousand and four crystal columns; the capitals were of amethyst, and the bases of pure gold; and from the roof, glittering with all the colours of the rainbow, hung countless stalactites. A throne stood in the midst—it was of lambent flame. From the mouths of two gigantic serpents which supported it issued enormous streams of vapour, the one dark and loathsome, the other bright and effulgent; and the two streams united with a strange noise, and flowed away into the earth, becoming a crystal river.

In the midst of the vapour, upon the throne sat the Genius of the Water, and she could not look upon him for the brightness of his face, which was as the pure snow. In his hand he held a chalice of gold—upon his brow was a crown of coral. Ida bent her knee and prayed to be forgiven. The Spirit then rose and said :—

“ Dost thou love me ?”

She answered, “ Yes !”

“ Hast thou no fear ?”

She answered, “ I have none !”

And the king waved his hand, and from the roof the waters rushed in mighty streams. Vast waves rolled tumultuously about her ; the serpents sent forth great streams of vapour—but she trembled not, when suddenly, with a fearful roar, a river fell at her feet, shaking the solid earth. Ida looked up, and saw, from an immeasurable height above her, a cataract rushing down ; the mist and the white spray covered her, but still she was not afraid. Suddenly the fall ceased, the great waves retreated from her feet, and a beautiful spirit, clothed in shells and long sea-weed, knelt to the king, and received from him a jewel, which Ida saw in a moment was one of the diamonds formed by her mother’s tears. Then her heart beat with joy, for she knew that one of her trials was passed.

* * * * *

After another long journey, Ida found herself in the depths of a forest. It was midnight, and the lofty trees were so thick above her head, that she

could not see whether or not the bright stars were looking down upon her. Shortly a voice reached her ear, saying :—

“ Dost thou love the forest and the trees ? ”

And she answered, “ Yes.”

“ Then thou art not afraid ? ”

And she said, “ No.”

At this moment a will-o'-the-wisp rose before her, and beckoned her to follow ; so she pressed her pearl necklace, and holding her precious diamond in her hand, she went on. This will-o'-the-wisp led her over terrible places, through cold swamps and tangled briars ; but she never paused or thought of aught but her little boy.

Presently the meteor disappeared. Ida found herself surrounded by trees such as she had never beheld before, and by great plants of which she had not even dreamed. The black trunks were seared by the lightning, and the vast branches waved to and fro, with a voice loud as the sea in its anger ; the trees seemed to move nearer and nearer to her, and to close slowly around her. From the long grass every kind of serpent and loathsome snake, and great toads, with bright eyes, came writhing and

creeping towards her. Ida trembled at these fearful sights, but she determined not to be afraid ; and she was not.

Then the wind arose, and the roar of the trees deafened her. From time to time the thunder rolled awfully above her head, and the flashes of the vivid lightning revealed to her all the horrors that surrounded her. A great fire-bolt now struck a large tree immediately before her, and split it to the roots, so that it fell with a horrible crash on either side of her. She stood firm, and beheld amid the shattered fragments a black adder ; and between its coils Ida saw sparkling the beautiful and sacred diamond which she sought,—and the one in her hand leapt with a strange and life-like joy, as, pressing her “ Pearl Blessings,” she stepped fearlessly up to the tree, regardless of the serpents, and, putting forth her hand on the black adder, seized her prize.

And again her heart beat quickly, for she knew that her second trial was passed.

IV.

A LONG and tedious journey awaited poor Ida. In the eager pursuit of the prizes she had won, she had not even marked the flight of time; but she now knew that it must be very long since she had left her home. She had been warned, too, in a dream, that her third and last trial was yet to come, and that it was to take place in her own little cottage by the lake. Every day she journeyed steadily onward, and at last, by a glorious sunset, worn and weary she reached the home of her happy infancy.

As she entered she started back, for, seated together, hand clasped in hand, she recognised the two loved beings, now grown up, which she had left in childhood. They ran forward and fell upon her neck, covering her face with kisses, and bathing it with tears of joy.

Then they led her in, and Christine (for so her daughter was called) told her all that had befallen

them, and how the time had passed since they had been left alone. And Ida found in theirs the reflex of her own life of childish and innocent pleasure; lovingly did she gaze upon her beautiful son, and saw with pain that the sad expression upon his chiselled brow had become deeper than ever, and that over his sweet mouth there was the look of an inner sorrow preying upon his heart. But Christine was the most lovely of the two. Her head, very small and exquisitely formed, was like an antique statue; and her hair, which was light and beautiful in colour, was so fine and smooth that it was just like satin. Her forehead and eyebrows were delicately formed, but told of strength of intellect; and in the playful depth of her blue eyes you might read a whole world of softness. Her nose was fine and delicate; her mouth quite perfect; and her figure the very model of what a little maiden's ought to be. Her breath was like the perfume of the morning; and her voice was a sweet sound woven from the music of a glad noon in the summer-tide.

The mother looked proudly upon her children, and could not tear herself away from them, but went and hung over them even while they slept; kissing

them so softly, and so often, that Julian dreamt a shower of rose leaves was falling upon his face; and Christine, that she was sitting under the waterfall, with the spray falling upon her cheek. It was very late when she went into her own chamber; and she took the two diamonds and fastened them in her hair, and pressing the "Pearl Blessings" to her heart, she cried to her mother to come to her, and tell her how she might recover the veil she had so undutifully thrown away. She waited a few moments, and from the earth a rose-coloured smoke ascended slowly; and in the midst of it, looking transcendentally lovely, stood the spirit of her mother. Ida knelt down, clasped her hands, and gazed with earnest fondness into the spirit's face. Sweet music floated upon the air, and her heart heard these words:—

"Ida, my child, be strong and faithful, even to the last! Alas! alas! only by the loss of thy daughter canst thou give speech and hearing to thy son! But even this we cannot command; for it must be of Christine's free will that her human spirit shall pass into the soul of her brother, and she thus become an angel to watch over him—to keep him from doing or suffering evil until he die. Behold, even

now I go to her couch, and will send a dream unto her, that she may know what she must do, if she be willing to sacrifice herself for her brother's good."

Then Ida wept bitterly. And when she looked up, her mother was gone; but in the place where she had stood, a white rose-tree had sprung up. And it bore three flowers upon one stem; and one was full blown, and the other two were opening buds, very beautiful to look upon—only in the heart of the larger bud was a little black mark. And Ida knew that the roses were herself and her children, and that the black mark was Julian's dumbness.

Then her spirit-mother took the form of a dove, and flew to Christine's bed and hovered over her pillow; and she dreamed a strange and troubled dream. She sighed heavily in her sleep, tossing restlessly from side to side of her little bed; but presently a smile came over her lovely face, and she slept soundly.

After they had all breakfasted, Christine went into her mother's room, and told her of her dream, and asked her to bless her, and to give her strength to lay down her life for her brother's good. Ida wept bitterly, and tried to dissuade her; but Christine

would not listen to her, only she prayed for her mother's blessing; and when, with a sorrowful heart, Ida, bidding her kneel down, had blessed her, she rose up, light as a bird, and went to seek her brother.

She found him seated on the ledge of rock, looking very sadly into the water. She went softly up to him, and told him by signs that she was to die that night, that he might be able to speak and to hear. Then Julian threw his arms around her neck, and sobbed, and was sadder than before. But Christine took him by the hand, and led him into her mother's room, and made him understand that the three flowers were their mother, himself, and her. And she told Ida that her hours would be as the leaves of the rose-bud, and that when the last leaf fell off it, she should die.

She began to pluck the leaves one by one, and as she did so, they floated a little while in the air, and then became part of the other bud; so that just as one decreased, the other grew larger, and the stain in its bosom faded away. Ida watched her child grow paler and more pale, as she plucked, leaf by leaf, the flower, which was herself; but Julian's eye grew bright with an intelligence it had never known before,

and the colour came into his cheek. But he was very sad, and looked wistfully into his sister's face; and by signs, which she alone could understand, implored her to gather no more leaves from the flower. But she listened not to him, and with a weaker hand, and a paler face, she pursued her task of love.

At last very few remained, and she was so weak, that she could only pluck them at intervals; but she had nearly finished her work, when a halo of light came upon her head, and her eyes became bright as stars, whilst a smile of divine happiness illumined her pale face.

And now there were but two leaves left, and her mother threw herself in despair at her child's feet, and clasped her knees in agony, holding back her hand! But Christine said:—

“Oh, my mother, hinder me not! Already is the ban departing from my brother, for, look! he listens and understands! A little more and he will speak. Let me gather but those two leaves, and his voice shall bless me before I die!”

And she gathered the last leaf but one, and sank down quite exhausted. For a long time her young heart seemed to have ceased to beat, but presently

she motioned to her mother to come near, and Ida knelt in anguish at her side whilst Christine whispered in her ear :—

“ Oh ! mother, lift me up that I may gather the last leaf, and my brother may bless me before I die ! Place thy diamonds upon his brow, and hang thy string of pearls about his neck, and the last leaf which I gather will become the veil that is wanting to complete the spell. Bless thee, my sweet mother ! I die to live again in Julian ! Lift me, mother, and bear me up that I may complete my work ! ”

Then Ida, weeping, did as she was told, and the glory of Julian's face, as his sister's spirit passed into his soul, was too radiant to look upon. And Christine lifted up her head, and motioned him to kiss her ; and as the last leaf of the rose was plucked, her dying kiss was upon his lips. He fell upon his knees—he blessed her ; and as his voice reached her ear a smile of ineffable sweetness played upon her face, and her spirit passed away in peace !

Just then there was a noise of trumpets, and of clarions, and the sound of horses' hoofs, and of a great army marching towards them ; and Ida rose up, and, with Julian, carried Christine into her little room,

and laid her upon the bed, strewing sweet flowers upon her pillow, and weeping bitterly, kissed her a thousand times.

A mist like a rainbow came over them, and upon the air arose a sound of heavenly music; and four white doves, bearing in their beaks the roseate veil, spread it softly over her. A perfume, sweeter than the spices of Araby, pervaded the chamber; and, upon a purple cloud like a great amethyst set in gold, Christine was borne upwards to the sky. Julian watched it till it was lost to sight, then he went out, and found his mother robed like a queen, sitting in the midst of councillors, warriors, and stately men. As he entered they all rose and bowed before him, hailing him as their king; and the Queen of the Fairies, whom Ida had seen in the deep wood, came, seated upon a sunbeam, and placed upon Julian's head the crown of his fathers; and his mother wept upon his neck. So Julian was made king; and when he was tempted to do wrong, the sweet spirit of his sister rescued him from evil, tempering his justice with mercy, his pride with humility, and his courage with prudence. And there is no reign on record so joyful as his.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUTH.

VERY many years ago,—so many indeed, that it would be very difficult to say when,—there dwelt in a massive stone castle on the borders of an enormous forest, a lady, who for a long time had mourned her husband, a gallant knight, slain in the Holy Land, bravely fighting under the great King Richard Cœur de Lion. The forest of which I have spoken, was very extensive ; every tree in it was of gigantic size, and the smallest was more than a hundred years old. The stems of the ivy which grew around their venerable trunks, were as big as the trees which we see now in the woods. Strange

stories were told about this forest, and wonderful sights were said to have been seen by the few who had been unfortunately benighted in it. No one ever voluntarily remained within its precincts after sunset; and some who had wandered far into it, and had lost their way, were never heard of again,—or came home having lost their senses, either from terror, or through the malevolent pranks of the spirits who haunted these ancient trees. Between the castle and this forest was a green lawn, around the edge of which fountains played night and day, throwing into the air streams of clear water; which had been blest by the King of the Good Spirits, and possessed the power of keeping away all noxious influences, as well as of driving back all fairies, gnomes, and spirits who were not subject to the monarch who had blest the water.

The lady of the castle, whose name was Bertha, had but one child, a daughter of surpassing loveliness. Fair as a snowdrop, her colour was like that which the reflection of a rose might cast in the sunlight on the cheek of a lily which grew near; her eyes were blue as the violets in the early spring. Indeed she was so beautiful, that no one who beheld her even

for a moment, could ever forget her face. She had been very carefully guarded by her mother, who having been herself very lovely, knew well the dangers which would beset her child the moment she was old enough to be conscious of the value of her charms.

Before leaving for the holy war, her father, according to the custom of the time, had betrothed her to the son and heir of a great baron—the friend of his own childhood, and his unsuccessful rival for the hand of Bertha. The young man was said to be very good, but he was neither handsome nor clever; and Mina, who compared him with the portraits of her ancestors, and with the heroes of whom her nurse told her, was not quite happy at the prospect of marrying Bertram,—for so he had been named after his father.

The time fixed for the marriage drew near; and Mina grew less and less contented with her fate. Her mother, who was devotedly fond of her, saw with pain that she became daily thinner,—that her cheek had lost its colour, and her step its lightness. But Mina kept her own counsel, and Bertha dreamed not of the cause of her daughter's sadness. She wandered

from room to room, through the long silent corridors of the castle ; and sat for hours alone in the deep casements, gazing she knew not wherefore into the wood beyond the garden, and wondering what the world was like in other places.

One night, when her mother had retired into her own chamber (it was the anniversary of the day on which she had heard of her husband's death), Mina sat at the window, looking up to the sky, and wondering at the beauties of the stars, when a voice sweeter than the song of the nightingale, was wafted to her ear ; never before had she heard such music, and she sat entranced. Suddenly she started, for she heard three times distinctly repeated her own name, and the tone in which it was spoken, was one which she had never heard before ; and it made her heart beat quickly, and the blood rush to her pale cheek. She listened : again in accents still more impassioned she heard her name. This time she was quite certain that it came from the great wood, and a sudden desire to go and see who had called her so earnestly, possessed her heart ; but remembering how often she had promised never to go beyond the fountain boundary, she hesitated. Had she been wise, she

would have gone away ; but she remained and listened.

Again the sweet voice called to her, and this time Mina fancied she heard something of pain and suffering in the tone ; once more, and more strongly, the desire to go into the wood came into her heart, so she stepped lightly past her mother's room, ran swiftly down the great staircase, and without daring to look at her father's portrait, opened the wicket door in the great gates and found herself on the lawn. The portal closed behind her with a loud noise, and fearful of being seen she glided hastily on. As she approached the fountains, the water rose so high, and with such force, that it splashed her from head to foot, and she paused a moment to consider ; then the fountains fell to their usual height, and Mina thought she would return home. But louder and sweeter than before the voice fell upon her ear, and she determined to advance. As she did so, the waters rushed upwards with a loud and dismal sound, the basins were overflowed, and her tiny feet were bathed, as, deaf to the warning thus mysteriously given, she ran madly into the wood.

She had not advanced many paces when she saw

before her a figure dressed in a coat of mail. Upon his head was a golden helmet, surmounted by tall waving plumes ; and he rode a horse, black as night, the breath of whose nostrils seemed to be of fire. In a moment the knight was at her feet ; he told her he had come from a far country, that he brought news of her father. Then Mina clapped her hands with joy, and would have run home to tell her mother, but he begged her so piteously to stay with him, that she yielded to his entreaties, and sat down upon a large stone at the foot of a giant tree. Then the knight began to talk earnestly to her, telling her that he had seen her at the window, and had become enamoured of her ; but being aware that she was betrothed to Bertram, he had not dared to come to the castle. Mina did not understand this, as she thought he might have done so quite well, if he had news of her father ; but she was too happy to think very much about anything, and too delighted to listen to the handsome knight who loved her so tenderly, and told her in a thousand pretty ways, how beautiful she was.

At last the moon rose slowly over the turrets of the castle, lights were seen hurriedly moving to and

fro in the windows, and Mina felt they were searching for her; so she arose, and would have gone away, but the knight looked so miserable, that she had no heart to do so. Suddenly, she thought she heard a step near her, and starting, she turned in fear to the knight and placed her hand in his; but the coldness of it went to her heart. Again, nearer and nearer came the step, and in a moment, pale and heated, Bertram stood before her; he uttered a cry of joy, and was about to clasp her to his heart, when, seeing the stranger knight, and that Mina's hand was clasped in his, the blood rushed to his temples, and, drawing his sword, he called upon him to defend his caitiff life. In a moment their weapons were flashing in the moonbeams, their blows rung sharply upon the trusty steel, and Mina, faint with terror, could neither speak nor move, only she felt that she could not withdraw her eyes from the dreadful combat. Bertram feeling himself wounded, and boiling with rage, struck wildly at his foe, smiting off his helmet; then, with a cry of vengeance and pain, he lifted his arm, and his sword fell heavily upon the knight's unprotected head. Staggering a moment, he fell senseless at Mina's feet; and so great was her horror, that she

did not see two black men, who placed Bertram on the ebon horse, and bore him away into the wood.

In despair she knelt by the knight's side. She took the scarf from her waist; and had just bound up the wound, and staunched the blood, when, drawn to the spot by the clashing of steel, and Mina's screams as the knight fell, Bertha, followed by servants carrying torches, came to the spot.

Mina, with a trembling voice, told her mother how the young knight had brought news of her father; and how Bertram, in a fit of rage and jealousy, had wounded him—she feared mortally. So Bertha ordered her servants to bear him gently into the castle; but when they came to the fountains, the waters rose furiously, and dashed against their faces; and they were so frightened that they would have laid him down. But Mina commanded them to advance, so they dared not disobey her; and with much difficulty passing the sacred barrier, the knight was carried to the castle, and laid upon a down bed in the state chamber. Mina watched by his side through the night, drinking in the beauty of that pale face, and listening to the words of love which came at intervals from his lips;

and she thought she had never heard so sweet a voice, and forgot even to think of Bertram.

Bertha mused all night upon what had happened when the knight had been carried past the fountain barrier; and in the morning she went to the water, and saw that it was no longer pure, but tinged with blood. So Bertha knew that she had admitted an enemy to her husband's house; and calling Mina, she forbid her to see the knight again, and told her that on that very day he should leave the castle. Then Mina wept bitterly, and wrung her hands; but she had been so long accustomed to obey her mother, that she went straight to her own turret, and locking herself in, passed the day in great misery. Several times her mother went to console her, but she would not let her in; and Bertha went away quite unhappy at the change that had come over her child.

When night came, and all was quite still, Mina opened her turret-door very softly, and crept down on tiptoe to the wing in which was the state-room where the stranger slept. She thought she would only listen a moment at the door, and then steal back to her own room; but as she approached the door, a low, stifled groan met her ear, and her heart beat

quickly as she heard her name spoken, evidently with pain, but in tones of intense affection. So instead of listening a moment at the door, she went in gently, and was surprised to see the knight dressed, and sitting on an oaken chair; while at his side stood a boy black as the night, but beautifully made. Then the knight, very pale and weak from loss of blood, staggered towards her, and told her he was a fairy prince, who, having seen her beauty, had determined to possess himself of her; and being unable by fair means to enter the castle, had taken these measures to see her, and to speak with her. He told her that at midnight he must be back in his own palace; and throwing himself at her feet, swore that he loved her, and implored her so earnestly to marry him, that, at first refusing, she at last consented. When she had done so, he took a ring from his finger and put it upon hers; and Mina felt a sudden fire run through all her veins, and she felt light as air, as if she could fly. Then the loud neighing of a horse was heard in the courtyard; and the knight, giving her his hand, and followed by the black page, led her down stairs, and lifting her on to his charger, leaped up behind her, and dashed madly across the lawn,

The moment they came to where the fountains were playing in the cold moonlight, the spray of the water turned to jets of vivid flame. The horse reared straight up, and trembled in every limb; but the knight dashed his spurs madly into his flanks, and forced him to face the fire. Again he tore the poor animal's side with his iron heel; and with a terrific bound the horse cleared the flaming barrier, and stood panting, and white with foam, on the borders of the dark wood.

Then the knight pressed Mina to his heart, and said that but for her wish he could never have entered the castle, or having once entered, could never have crossed the fountain barrier; and he called her by a thousand endearing names, and swore by the moon she should never repent having loved him. So they rode slowly into the deep wood, Mina feeling so sad and so lonely that she wept; but she did not see that each tear as it fell became a little white flower, with two green leaves, springing up in the grass, and quite different from any other flower in the great wood.

At last they came to a graveyard, where were the ruins of a church, through the windows of which

gleamed a pale blue light. As they passed, Mina saw a number of hideous old women sitting over a great bubbling cauldron, and muttering to themselves, and she trembled violently; but the knight in a loud voice spoke some words she could not understand, and with a weird scream they disappeared. When they had reached the centre of the churchyard, the knight leaped from his horse, bearing Mina like an infant in his arms. She looked round and shuddered. They were in the midst of the tombs; and to Mina's imagination the white stones assumed in the dim light the forms of spirits, who seemed to gaze earnestly upon her. Over head a gigantic yew-tree spread its hoary branches, and at their feet was a newly made grave; and the grass grew rank and thick. Under the yew-tree was an ancient tombstone, covered with strange devices, and upon it stood a cup, a row of red beads, and a parchment scroll; about which a pale line of blue flame rose and fell fitfully, casting an unearthly glow upon everything around.

Mina trembled violently, and turned to her companion to pray him to take her away; but he looked so beautiful, and bent his eyes upon her with

such intense tenderness, that she thought she would go through anything to become his bride. Suddenly, as the knight stamped his foot upon the earth, a figure, robed from head to foot in black, his face quite concealed, stood before them. He took a hand of each, and muttered some strange sounds, in a low, sepulchral tone. His touch, like ice, sent a cold shiver to Mina's heart, as receiving from the knight a ring, he placed it upon her finger—while the bell tolled twelve. Then the priest called aloud; and the terrified girl shuddered as she heard the name of "Bertram." Immediately she saw her lover, pale as death, led forward by the two black spirits who had borne him into the wood after the fight. And the knight laughed derisively as the priest gave him the parchment, and dipping a pen into the cup, bade him witness the marriage of Mina the Countess with the Knight of the Black Forest. And Bertram wrote his name on the parchment, and fell senseless beside the grave which had been made for him; and Mina fainted away, and was carried by the knight to his palace in the midst of the Black Forest.

For a short time Mina was very happy, and forgot in the wonders and magnificence by which she

was surrounded, her mother and her ill-fated lover. But soon her better spirit awoke in her; and all the caresses of her demon husband did not suffice to console her. She thought continually of her home, and repented bitterly of her folly; for every day she saw more clearly how wicked her husband was, and many things happened too terrible to relate. Soon the knight perceived this change, and he began to treat her harshly and brutally, and to tell her that he had only married her to revenge himself upon her father, who, through the friendship of the good spirit who had blest the fountains, had done many things to injure him and destroy his power.

One day he told her he had found a wife more beautiful than she was, and one who would not pine for her home, and repent being the wife of the second prince among the Dark Fairies of the world.

“But that thou art protected from me by the friends of thy father,” said he, “I would cast thee in the lake beneath thy window.” And Mina trembled, for she had often looked into that black water; and her heart grew lighter when he added—“Go, leave my castle, and let not my servants find thee in the forest the twelfth hour from this.” And he mounted

his black steed with the fiery breath, and gallopped away.

Now Mina rose up, and taking the jewels from her hair, and the zone of gold from her waist, and the rings from her fingers, and the rich slippers from her feet, she put on a white robe, tying it round her with her long hair, and ran as quickly as she could in the direction in which she thought her home lay. Soon she became terribly confused, for there were no paths,—and the great trees on all sides looked so alike that she knew not which way to turn. She was afraid that if she went into the wood she would be lost, for she had heard of terrible things which were done in those forests after midnight; so she knelt down and prayed. And when she rose from the damp grass she walked straight on, and presently she saw upon the ground a beautiful little white flower; and as she stooped to pluck it she saw a second, and then a third and a fourth; and going still on she found a continuous line of them. So it came into her head that she would follow the line thus pointed out, and she did so; and as she came to the last of the little flowers, the noise of the fountains, very loud and joyful, broke upon her ear; and through the trees

the turrets of her father's castle gladdened her poor heart.

She walked as fast as she could, for the night was closing in, and she found herself still in the terrible forest. She felt very ill and exhausted; but her fears and her hopes sustained her, and at length she reached the fountains. Bright and joyously did the waters rise, flashing like diamonds in the air; the moon was up, and the castle looked so grand and solemn, that Mina stood for a moment transfixed, then sunk quite faint upon the smooth grass, and fell asleep.

She had not lain there very long ere her mother, looking out of her window, saw, stretched in the moonlight, a white figure; and a sudden joy at her heart told her it was her child. So she ran down, and rained kisses on her cheeks, and rubbed her cold hands, and had her carried into her own room, and laid upon her bed. And great preparations were made; for she saw that the wedding-ring was upon her finger, and that she was about to become a mother. As the clock of the castle struck twelve, a little boy was born. And Mina lay all night with her white arm about her child's neck, very happy, and

quite forgetful of all the sorrows and misery she had undergone.

Just as the earliest gleam of morning struggled with the darkness, Mina felt a soft wind fanning her cheek, and a delicious perfume floating around her ; and the chamber was filled with a bright light. Then she turned on her side, and saw at the foot of the bed a beautiful fairy, with dew-drops in her hair, and white wings, like the mist of a summer's morning ; so she gazed delightedly upon the figure, for during many months she had seen none but the gloomier spirits who inhabited the air. Then the fairy waved her hand, and said, in a voice clear as a silver bell :—

“ Alas ! unhappy child, in the joy of the moment thou dreamest not of all that awaits thee, or how severely thy folly and undutiful conduct to thy mother will be punished. Nevertheless, thou doest well to gaze so fondly on thy son ; for to him is reserved (shouldst thou answer wisely the three questions I am about to put to thee) the task of freeing thee and himself from the perils into which thy blind love has brought thee. Thy husband is dead. At the moment thy child was born he died, and will no more trouble thee ; but the evil which

thou hast done must bear its fruit—and it is this: Thy demon marriage, celebrated with wicked rites, was finished at the hour of midnight, when all the spirits of good and evil hold equal power over the fate of mortals; thy child was born at the same fatal hour; and, what is worse, to-night is that of the whole year in which the hours of darkness are equal to those of light. Therefore, until twelve years are accomplished thy son must be given over to the power equally of the good and evil genii; and his little life will be one of struggle and bitterness—for none may aid him. On thy answers will his fate depend: if thou choosest wisely, he shall vanquish all his enemies, and free thee from the penalties of thy sin. Choose now, therefore, his career in life; and mark well that upon thy choice hangs not only thy fate, but that of all who are connected with thee.”

Then Mina looked proudly on her child; and she saw that he was strong, that his little brow was broad and full, and that his eyes were bright; so she thought a moment, and said boldly:—

“Let him follow the footsteps of my fathers. Stainless as the snow, brave as the lions of the forest, for centuries they have from boyhood wielded

the sword transmitted to them, and in the field have they died gloriously. Let him win his spurs as a knight, and die as they have done."

Then the child smiled brightly, and clapped his little hands; and Mina felt she had chosen well. And again the voice, like a silver bell, came upon the air, and the spirit spoke:—

"Rightly hast thou selected—as thy child's spirit bears thee witness. Choose now a gift in which he shall excel: as a poet; in music; or the gentle art which teaches to transfer the face of nature and of man—making the dumb canvas speak."

Then Mina thought, and bent her head, and answered:—

"Let him have a knight's gift: let his voice be sweet as the voice of a glad bird; let him carol blithely as he rides upon his way."

And again the smile came over the child's face; and he gave voice to his joy in a sound which, to the mother's ear, at least, was most musical.

Once more the sweet words of the spirit pæteoy upon the air, and they said:—

"Choose again, and thy desire shall be granted; but beware that thou dost not choose ill."

And Mina reflected, watching intently the face of her child. She thought of beauty, but she looked and saw that he was already beautiful ; of health, but so strong did he appear, that she fancied this was not needful. Then the memory of her own weakness and its sad results came over her mind, and he said, lifting her voice, and clasping her infant to her heart :—

“ Let him be firm and strong in his resolves, that he may not fall into the error of his mother’s youth.”

Then the child’s lips closed, and his little eyes were lifted up, as if in prayer ; and the face of the good spirit, beautiful as it had been before, became so radiant that Mina could not look upon it ; but the boy held forth his little hands, and put out his rosy lips to kiss her. So the fairy bent down and kissed his brow ; then turning her soft eyes, full of sweet human pity, upon Mina, she said :—

“ Prepare, unhappy child, for sorrow. When the twelfth hour of thy child’s life will have passed, the trial will begin ; and I warn thee, hard will be the fight between the powers of evil and of good, for this soul will be a great gain to whichever side shall win him. Despair not ; wisely hast thou

chosen ; and so far as it is permitted by the all-powerful Fates, I will watch over, and keep him from harm."

Mina gazed earnestly upon the fairy ; but presently she vanished, Mina knew not how or when, though she had not taken her eyes from her. But her mind was full of her child, and of the mystery of his birth—of bright hope mingled with bitter fears. She pressed him fondly to her heart, and fell asleep.

When she awoke she found that the boy had been taken away from her, and placed in a wonderful cradle by her side. At the head of the little bed sat a figure clothed in white ; her face, severe in its extreme regularity of feature, was almost repulsive ; yet if you looked stedfastly upon it, you saw an under expression of great softness. Her brow was high and noble ; and her hair, gathered simply to the back of her head, fell in rich masses from a hoop of plain gold.

At the foot of the little cradle sat a younger spirit, exquisitely beautiful ; her hair, soft and sunny, fell around her fair shoulders in laughing clusters of waving curls ; her eye flashed with incessant brightness, and her colour came and went with every

thought that passed through her mind. Her skin was pure as alabaster ; a smile, ever varying yet ever present, played about her coral lips, dimpling the soft cheek, and displaying the pearl-like teeth. Her figure was very graceful, and her step had the lightness of an antelope ; and as Mina woke gradually, she felt that the twelfth hour of her child's life was past, and that already the struggle had begun for his innocent soul. And the spirits which sat by the cradle were the spirits of Truth and Falsehood.

The infancy of Arthur (so Mina called her child) passed much as that of other children, to all eyes except those of his mother ; but to her, watching him day and night, many things were very different. With the earliest ray of the morning he awoke smiling sweetly ; and through the day no child could be more blithe and merry. He chased the butterfly, ran like a chamois, and leaped across the patches of shadow thrown by the sun from the stately trees upon the lawn. From morn till eve he sung so cheerily that Mina's heart was made quite light ; but as soon as the sun declined and the shadows began to lengthen, his spirits fell, his cheek grew pale, and the large tears filled his melancholy eyes, and he clung silent and

sometimes trembling to his mother's arm. Now and then he would speak loudly and angrily, and strike with his hand in the air, as if he saw something which Mina was not permitted to see ; then he would fall asleep, perhaps, weary with the day's amusement, and in the dead of the night would start with a shrill cry from his slumbers, and clasp his little arms wildly around his mother.

At such times Mina knew that the evil ones were at hand, and prayed fervently. After a time he would again go to sleep, but his dreams were broken ; and when he awoke in the morning he was often pale and languid. But with the first beam of sunlight all trace of this disappeared, and he was like any other little boy of his age. But by night or by day, close to him, one on each side, Mina saw that the figures of Truth and Falsehood never left him for one moment ; and Arthur thought they were his nurses, and wondered in his little mind why they treated him so differently. But Mina saw with a grateful heart that the Spirit of Truth had far more influence with him than that of Falsehood ; and she consoled herself, thinking that the twelve years would soon pass.

One day Arthur, who was now six years old, was

playing upon the lawn, when a butterfly, such as he had never seen, flew by and lighted upon a flower at his feet. He tried to catch it, but it escaped from his hand and settled again a little way off. Once more he tried to catch it, for it was so bright, and the colours upon its large wings were so beautiful, that he longed to possess it. From flower to flower, earnest and eager, the little boy pursued it, until it flew past the fountains, and settled provokingly near, just on the soft moss which covered the ancient root of the outermost tree of the Black Forest. "May I go and catch the butterfly?" he asked of his attendants. And the Spirit of Truth said, "If you go, you will repent it bitterly." But the other spirit said, "Yes, dear boy, go! No harm shall come to you; I will myself go with you."

Then little Arthur paused a moment; he sighed heavily, and looked at the beautiful butterfly which lay fast asleep upon the soft moss; and he looked at Truth, but her face was stern and sad, and he saw she would not change her mind. Then he looked at Falsehood, and she laughed, and called him a little fool, and bade him follow her. So he said, "I will go;" and he attempted to pass the fountain barrier,

but the waters splashed in his face and drove him back. Arthur did not like this ; the blood boiled in his veins, and he said, " Who shall stop me if I choose to go ? " So he dashed through the water, and gained the tree upon which the butterfly was asleep. Then he crept noiselessly up to the root, and laid his hand upon the insect ; but the moment he touched it, it turned into a little girl, not quite so big as himself, and lovely as the loveliest child you ever saw in a dream of heaven. And the child put her soft hand into his and said, " Come with me into the wood, and I will give thee beautiful presents, which I have brought thee from a far land."

So he took her hand, and she led him into the forest until they came to a rock, on the face of which was a brazen ring ; and the little girl pulled the ring with all her force, but could not move it. So Arthur tried, and finding it did not yield at once, he said, " Thou shalt open !" and putting out all his force, the door flew back ; and the winds, which had been pent up there, rushed out with great fury. The north wind struck him with its cold hand, and threw him on the ground, and the east wind cut his little face so that it bled ; but the south wind kissed him and

passed on, and the west wind stole past gently and hovered near him. Then the little girl sprinkled his face with water, and the west wind fanned him softly, and he got up ; and the maiden fell on his neck, and laid her soft cheek against his, and whispered to him to come into the cavern. So he kissed her gently, and went in.

Scarcely had they passed the portal, when the gate with a loud noise was slammed to, and a laugh, fiendish and horrible, rang in his ears. Arthur looked for the little girl, but she was nowhere to be seen ; and in the place where she had been, stood an imp of darkness, with yellow eyes and red teeth, grinning horribly. And Arthur saw through a hole high up in the cavern, that the sun was fast going down ; then all his courage forsook him, and he sat down and cried bitterly.

Oh ! what a wretched night the poor boy passed. If he fell asleep for a moment, the noisome bats flapped their cold damp wings against him, the toads crawled over his face, and the snakes coiled about his wrists ; but he knelt down, as he had been taught to do, said his little prayers, and sat up, determined to wait patiently till morning. Presently the moon

rose, and after a long time climbed so high into the heavens, that the bright beams came through the great hole in the roof of the cave and fell upon the ground ; and Arthur shuddered, for he saw by the light the bones of many children scattered around him, and against the sides of the cavern I dare say as many as a hundred skeletons were ranged. But it was not in Arthur's nature to be afraid of anything, so he soon fell fast asleep.

In his dreams he thought he saw his mother weeping bitterly, and sitting alone in the hall of the castle ; and he heard her say, " Oh, my boy, my boy, why hast thou left me ? If thou comest not back by the morning I shall die ! " And he awoke very sad, and saw that the sun had risen ; so the blitheness of his heart returned, and he began to sing. And as his song grew louder and louder, a light spread softly through the cavern ; and Arthur was enchanted to see that the skeletons were all gone, and that in their places hung a number of beautiful dresses, all evidently belonging to children. Then Arthur remembered that he had omitted to sing his morning hymn ; so he knelt down, and began to sing in a voice of ineffable sweetness. He felt a ~~strange excitement~~ in

his heart, and the notes of his hymn echoed gloriously through the enormous cavern; and Arthur was startled at the harmonious sound of his own voice.

As he ceased, and the last echo died away, all the bats and toads, the snakes and vile reptiles disappeared; the dresses which hung upon the walls fluttered, and to his bewilderment, Arthur found himself surrounded by a group of children, many as beautiful as he. And the eldest came up to him, and said:—

“O gentle brother, how can we thank thee for our liberty? For, behold, this sweet voice of thine has freed us. We are all the children of the people who live around the Black Forest, enticed here one by one by the same little girl, in reality a wicked imp, who brought thee here; and here we should have remained but for thy courage and thy exquisite voice.”

And all the children pressed near him, and kissed him tenderly, and called him their friend and brother.

“But, alas!” said the one who had first spoken, “none of us but thou hast the power to open the gate. Whosoever opens it may not go out; what, therefore, shall we do?” Then Arthur hesitated for a moment, but took the brazen ring of the gate, and drew it open; and the children all blessed him, and passed out, all

save one, a little girl, who lingered behind, and said, "I will not go : I have neither father nor mother—let me stay with thee here!" And while he turned to speak to her, the door flew to, and they were left alone.

Arthur had now time to see his little companion, and he found that she was so lovely that he could not withdraw his gaze from her face. And they sat upon the ground, and looked into each other's eyes ; and on that dark, damp rock they looked like two dew-drops upon a toadstool.

At last they became very hungry ; and Arthur looked to the window, and thought he could climb up to it. So he tried ; and although it was very steep and difficult, he at last succeeded. Then he came down again, and they went to work to make a rope by which he might pull his little friend up after him. They spent the whole day in making the rope ; but they worked hard, and about half an hour before sunset it was quite completed. Arthur tied one end round the slender waist of the little girl, and the other he fastened round his own. In a very little time he reached the hole, and with great difficulty managed to get outside. He then drew the little maiden slowly up ; and

in ten minutes they both stood high in the air, upon the roof of the black cavern.

They had not been there many minutes when the tramping of horses and the sound of trumpets sent all the blood into Arthur's cheek, and in his excitement he leaned over the edge of the rock to see the army pass. As he watched the plumes dancing, the steel flashing, and the spears glistening in the sunshine, his little heart beat so fast that he became giddy, and fell headlong to the ground, and, but that the charger under whose feet he fell reared at the moment, he would have been trodden to death.

Seeing what had happened, the knight reined in his steed, dismounted, and raised the poor child in his arms. The blood flowed from his mouth, and he was quite stunned. Then they heard from the top of the rock a loud scream, and looking up, saw the little girl wringing her hands, and crying bitterly; so the knight ordered one of his pages to go and bring the child down, and then rode on through the wood.

When Arthur came to his senses he found himself seated before a knight upon a noble charger, and just within sight of the tree upon which the butterfly

had lighted. In a few moments they reached the barrier, and the fountains rose high into the air, and sprinkled them all with the sweetest perfume; and one by one the knights dipped their hands into the water, and all fatigue passed from their faces, and they looked more like a troop of warriors just setting out, than one returning from the fight. And Bertha's heart was greatly rejoiced when she found herself clasped once more to the heart of the stalwart warrior she had so long mourned as dead; and Arthur, when he was recovered from the effects of his terrible fall, thought he had never seen so noble a sight as the grey-headed soldier who had been for sixteen years in Palestine.

When Mina's father had heard how she had treated the son of his old friend, he was very wroth, and swore by the lion heart of the king his master, that he would not speak to her until Bertram was recovered from the hand of the evil spirits of the Black Forest.

At first he would not take any notice of little Arthur, but ere long he found himself insensibly drawn towards the noble boy, whose gallant bearing and marvellous skill in the use of the little arms

which his mother had given him out of the old armoury, were the theme of all who saw him. By degrees his heart relaxed, and he told the boy tales of war, and of the brave deeds of his companions who had died in battle. Then Arthur's eye would flash brightly, his cheek flush, and his hand mechanically clasp the handle of his sword; and the old man was satisfied, and said :—

“ He shall ride by my side when the hour comes that we may seek Bertram ; and if he conduct himself as I fear not but he will, with my own hands will I fasten on his golden spurs.”

Now Arthur grew every day more and more attached to the little maiden who had remained with him in the cave ; and she was never tired of sitting by his side, gazing mournfully into his beautiful face, and listening to the sweet music of his voice. No one knew who she was, but all loved her for her gentle sweetness of disposition, and the exquisite beauty of her face ; the aged knight in particular became so fond of her, that he could not bear her to be out of his sight.

In this manner nearly three years passed away. Day by day the old warrior became more and

more proud of his grandchild, and by degrees he had almost forgiven his daughter. As the time approached which was to decide the fate of her child, Mina grew most anxious, and saw with pain that the struggle between the good and evil spirits for the soul of her son became more fierce; but with great delight she remarked, too, that he had gradually attached himself to the Spirit of Truth, and listened no longer to the voice of Falsehood. I have not told you much of these spirits, because what happens every day seems at last not worth notice; but it had been a hard fight. Sometimes the winning beauty and silvery voice prevailed over the calm grandeur and almost stern accents of his better guardian, and Arthur yielded for a moment to some impulse of evil; but whenever he did so, the sadness of his mother's face recalled him to himself, and he would throw himself into the arms of the better spirit, and would neither speak to nor listen to the tempter. For many days, then, she would look so miserable, and weep so bitterly, that his heart softened, and he fell again, but always less strongly, under her influence.

No news came of Bertram; and at last the old knight mustered all his forces, and determined to lay

siege to the castle of the Princes of the Black Forest. Merry days were those for Arthur; the forges rung with the blows of the armourers, who were repairing old and making new sets of mail, polishing helmets, sharpening the sword and the battle-axe, and putting new thongs to the knights' shields. All worked hard, and slept soundly; only Mina, and the little girl, whose name was Selina, were not merry in those days.

One night, when all was hushed in the castle, a great noise was heard in the distance, growing louder and louder every minute. All started from their sleep; and, lo! a bright light rose from the centre of the Black Forest, and the rush of men and horses, the blast of the trumpet, and the shrill notes of the clarion rose above the roar of the gigantic trees shaken by a mighty wind.

Then the aged warrior called his squires, put on his armour, and hastily summoned a council of war, and said:—

“I have dreamed a strange dream: the spirit of my old friend, whose son should have married my child, stood before me, and said: ‘Oh, tardy and little zealous friend, knowest thou not that Bertram

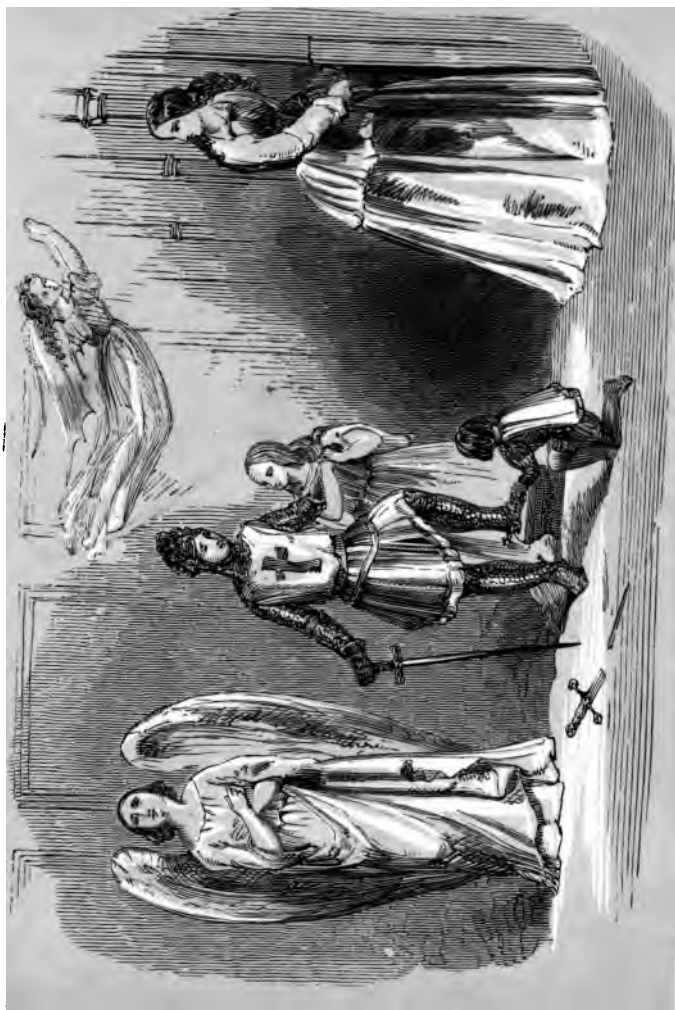
piners in the dungeons of the Black Forest, and only now hast thou prepared to rescue him. Waste no time—for already the Princes of the Darkness know of thy intention, and they are upon the hills.' Let therefore the trumpets sound a defiance. We will go out and meet them."

At the first sound on the air, Mina, who now seldom slept, went to her son's room. As she entered she stood transfixed, for the glory of the boy's face was as that of the sun. His figure seemed to have dilated to that of a man—fire burned upon his cheek, and his eyes flashed with light. His nostrils rose and fell, and he looked like one inspired by some glorious purpose. At his feet, gazing with tearful pride upon him, sat Selina, and on either side stood the good and evil spirits; but the face of Truth was bright and triumphant, while her antagonist drooped her head, and bit her lips with passion.

Now he was armed from head to foot; and the spirits of Truth and Falsehood took each a sword and a shield, and offered them to Arthur. The one was plain and very heavy, of steel, and the shield of leather, with a brazen rim, and brazen studs; but the other was of polished steel, bound with gold, the handle of amber,

inlaid with precious stones, and the shield was glorious to look upon, bright with silver studs, and very richly ornamented. The boy was sadly puzzled, but he said:—"Upon my sword and my shield all will depend, so I will not choose those lightly." And he knelt down and prayed to the God of battles to direct his choice. When he rose, he girded on the plain steel sword and the leather buckler. As he did so the face of Truth became irrepressibly grand and joyous; but Falsehood cast her sword upon the ground, and it shivered into pieces, and with a wild scream of anger and disappointment she flew away. And Mina's heart swelled in her bosom as she drew her boy closely to her and blessed him. Then Selina took from her neck a blue scarf, and bound it round his arm, whispering the while in his ear. The colour faded from Arthur's cheek; but as the knot was tied, Selina was changed into a white dove, and flew out of the window into the air; and his mother wondered at all that she saw.

Now morning came, and the gallant little band of armed men rode out of the castle gates, and were drawn up on the great lawn. Last of all came forth the old knight; and at his side was Arthur, mounted



“ And Selina took from her waist a blue scarf, and bound it round his arm.”

on a noble charger. Never shall such a sight be seen again. His visor was up, and his face, bright as an angel's, looked radiant with hope; his mouth was closed, but his eyes sparkled with the joy of his heart. His horse pranced and curvetted, caracolling proudly, as if conscious of the beauty of his rider, who sat as if he were part of the animal. As the knight spoke a few words to his troop the fountains became wine; and he bade them each take a draught, for that it would give them strength for the battle which was at hand. So they drank, and all leaped into their saddles.


Then the trumpet sounded, and the knight took a banner, upon which was woven the word "Truth," and gave it to Arthur, and said to him:—"Bring this banner safe to me, or die with it around thy body." And Arthur kissed the flag, and rode gallantly by the old man's side. Presently, to the wonder of all, a white dove came and lighted upon the pole of the banner, but Arthur looked up and smiled; and when he laid his hand upon the blue scarf the dove flew down and settled upon his wrist, and when he had kissed it gently, resumed its place.

About noon they came in sight of the enemy's

camp, and, as had been agreed, drew out immediately into battle array; and the blast of the trumpet, bearing their proud defiance, rang through the forest. It was answered in a moment, and the legions of the Black Princes poured forth, and, with a wild yell, rushed forward. The two armies met with a shock that shook the earth, and for a long time the fate of the battle seemed undecided. Like the waves of an agitated sea, the columns were driven backwards and forwards; and the shouts of victory and of defiance rose alternately from each army. Wherever the battle raged most furiously, the white-headed warrior might be seen, fighting side by side with the gallant boy. Often the white banner was flying in advance of the troops; and was only to be recalled by the voice of the old knight.

But the sun began to decline in the west, and Arthur knew in his own heart that if the battle was not won before it sunk, it would be lost; so, pretending he did not hear the voice of his grandfather, he called around him the flower of the army, and, binding the banner which had been entrusted to him around his body, he threw away his shield, and called upon them to follow him to victory or death. Then

they laid their lances in rest, and dashed forwards with such impetuosity, that the lines were broken at once; rout and dismay spread through the camp of the enemy. Just as victory seemed certain, and the dove, which had hovered over his head all through the day, flew caressingly to him, and perched upon his wrist, the leader of the Black Armies, seeing how Arthur seemed to sway the fate of the day, galloped to the spot, and rallying his broken troops, returned to the charge. But they were bravely met; inch by inch the ground, slippery with blood, was fought: again and again the enemy were driven back; when the leader, throwing up his visor, and revealing a hideous skull, raised his battle-axe, and, grinning horribly, bade Arthur surrender. The boy's eye flashed fire, and lifting his sword, red with blood, in the air, he smote the Black Prince fiercely upon the arm. Then the skull grinned horribly, and struck a blow which would have crushed Arthur, had not the dove perched upon his shoulder broken the force of the blow with his soft body, while the feathers turned the edge of the weapon and saved his life. Through and through the body of the poor bird the keen edge passed; but in a moment a being robed in a white garment stood



upon the ground, and the Black Prince trembled as the figure said, "Knowest thou not that love is stronger than death?" And he turned his horse's head and fled.

Then the old warrior, who from a hill had watched the fight, rode up, and, embracing the brave boy, knighted him upon the spot. And great were the rejoicings; the slaughter of the enemy had been prodigious. Having caught one of the chargers, Arthur placed Selina upon his own gallant steed, and they rode to the castle. There they searched the dungeons and found Bertram, and releasing him carried him back in triumph. Many noble prisoners, too, were set free; and after clearing the castle of all living things, it was set on fire, and left a blackened ruin for the owls and serpents. Gaily did the gallant band move homewards; and as they rode side by side, Selina told Arthur the story of her life, which was so interesting that the day passed, and they found themselves at the fountain barrier before they thought they had been an hour together. Here they were met by Mina and Bertha; and the old warrior gave his sword and his battle-axe to Arthur, and promised Bertha he would go no more to the wars. Bertram

fell at Mina's feet, and the old man blessed them and joined their hands. And the Spirit of Truth appeared dazzling as the sunbeam upon the still sea; and she took water from the fountains, and sprinkling it upon the head of Arthur, declared that all his troubles were over; and she gave Selina to him, and bade him guard her as the apple of his eye, for in due time she should become his bride. So all were happy; and Arthur took a dove for his crest, with this motto—
“Love is stronger than death.”

THE BROTHERS.

ONCE upon a time (I know not why all fairy tales commence thus, but I suppose for some very good reason), there lived in a small mountain castle an old baron and his wife, who, after they had been married many years, were blessed by the birth of a little daughter. You may easily imagine how fond they were of this child. Nothing indeed was good enough for her; and had she not been by nature extremely amiable, she must have been quite spoiled. As it was, however, she grew every day more and more beautiful, and her sweetness of disposition, and the gentleness of her temper, divided with her beauty the admiration of all who knew her.

Her childhood passed away very happily, and as she gained in years, she became her father's constant companion, listening delightedly to the tales he would tell her of the noble deeds of brave men who had fought by his side in the wars of his youth.

The baron had indeed but one passion, and this was his daughter; he looked at her lovely face, he thought of her goodness, and said to himself, "My child shall be a queen; for surely no one ever was born who would do such honour to a throne."

And in this he did not err, for by the time she had reached her fifteenth year, her figure was so majestic and so commanding, that all who met her, bowed themselves as if by an irresistible impulse before her.

Very soon the fame of her marvellous beauty spread far and wide, and from all quarters her father received proposals for her hand; but as none yet came from a king's son, they were all summarily dismissed.

At length, one autumn evening, as Eleanor was walking alone in the wood, she was startled by the sound of a silver horn, and looking up, beheld close before her a young man in a magnificent hunting costume, mounted upon a snow-white steed. In a moment, from all parts of the forest, horsemen simi-

larly, but less gorgeously attired, surrounded the stranger. He spoke to them hurriedly, and pointing to the sun, which was already low in the horizon, put spurs to his horse, and was on the point of galloping away, when his eyes fell upon the fair maiden. For an instant he reined in his panting steed, and cast a single glance of passionate admiration upon the upturned and speaking face before him. He hesitated, would have leaped to the ground, but, apparently restrained by some sudden recollection, bent to the saddle-bow and vanished. When the last of the train of horsemen had disappeared, Eleanor sat down at the foot of an old oak, and wept (she scarcely knew why) very bitterly; she buried her face in her hands, and took no heed of the flight of time.

All the stories that her father had told her, all the dreams of beauty and chivalry which had warmed her young heart, seemed to have been realised, only to be snatched away, in the form and bearing of the young stranger. Mournfully raising her head, she saw standing at her side a female figure, robed in a garment woven in the colours of the rainbow; upon her brow was a single star, and in her hand she held a wand of ivory, with which she traced upon the

ground these words—"Be patient to the end, and hope." As the wand moved along, pale blue flowers followed it, registering in the sweet blossom of the *forget-me-not* the message which had borne such comfort to her soul. Then the figure rose into the air and vanished.

Eleanor gazed joyfully upon the flowers, and turned with a light step and gladdened heart towards her home.

At the castle gate her father and her mother met her, and, chiding her for her long absence, told her that the son of Egbert, the good king, had come to demand her hand, and that he had been accepted by them. The maiden's heart sank within her, as she heard this; but remembering the words of promise, she took courage, and retired at her mother's bidding to her bower. There she attired herself in a robe of gold tissue, studded with silver stars, fastening it around her small waist with a girdle of precious stones. A string of pearls confined her beautiful hair; her feet were in slippers of embroidered silk, and upon her arms, whiter than the throat of the swan, she wore bracelets of pure gold.

When she descended, her father and mother, full

of pride, led her into the hall where their guest sat with his chosen knights, regaling themselves daintily. As she entered, the prince rose from his seat, and kissing her hand, swore by the stars, and by the moon, that beauty such as hers, had never before been seen upon the earth. He could not withdraw his eyes from her face, gazing so intently upon it, that she felt quite embarrassed, and the words which he whispered into her ear, expressed such passionate admiration, that she blushed like a rose in the summer tide.

As the days flew by, Eleanor became very sad, for she could not endure the prince, the very sight of whom was more odious to her every day. Her mother shared this repugnance with her, but the baron was so blinded by the wealth and magnificence of the stranger, that he thought only of the realisation of his hopes, and of marrying his child to a king's son.

Time passed; and the night previous to the day appointed for the wedding came at length! Very miserable and very disconsolate did poor Eleanor feel, as from the window of her tower her eye wandered over the distant plains. As she sat thus, wholly

absorbed in her own thoughts, she beheld in a snow-white car, made of the sea-foam, and drawn by four birds of Paradise, the spirit she had seen in the wood. As the car paused opposite to her casement, the spirit rose, and passing her hand thrice over the maiden's eyes, raised her wand and pointed to the forest. Then a strange feeling came over her—her vision seemed suddenly strengthened, she knew not how, and she saw through the clustered trees, and behold! the flower-written message had sprung up luxuriantly, and waved towards her with a pleased and joyful motion!

Again the fairy lifted her wand, and far away—so far indeed that their horses looked no bigger than mice, Eleanor saw a gallant band galloping furiously towards her, and with delight and thankfulness she recognised in their leader the huntsman whom she had seen in the wood. As she clasped her hands, the fairy leaned over her, and kissing her forehead, disappeared.

Eleanor thought for a few moments over all that had just occurred, and with a calm and trustful heart prayed earnestly, and laid her head upon her soft pillow. In the morning she sought her mother, and

confiding to her the reasons which induced her to make the request, entreated her to delay to the latest possible moment her marriage. To refuse her beloved child anything was at all times difficult, so the kind baroness promised at once to assist her to the utmost.

The appointed hour struck, and the prince, magnificently clad in rich velvet, paced impatiently up and down the courtyard. Time sped on; and at the expiration of the second hour the baron, who had several times summoned his daughter, became very angry, and mounting hastily the stairs, entered her chamber, and led her sternly to the chapel.

As they passed under the arched doorway, Eleanor, for the first time since the fairy visit of the previous night, felt her heart fail her. She knelt for a few moments upon the marble pavement, and then with a firm step walked, leaning on her father's arm, to the altar. As the priest entered, a shade passed for an instant over the fair face of the bride, but was quickly dispelled, as, bright in the glory of a divine hope, a colour, like the ray of sunset upon the snow, spread over her cheek. Wonderingly did her father

gaze upon her ; and the disconcerted bridegroom bit his lip until the blood flowed.

Then the priest lifted up his voice, the echo of his prayer still rang through the long aisles of the chapel, when the clatter of horses' hoofs and the loud blast of a silver horn, followed by the clash of steel, was heard in the courtyard, and before any of the marriage party could recover their surprise, a youth of the noblest presence, and whom, with a cry of uncontrollable joy, Eleanor instantly recognised, had bounded from his steed, white with foam, and, flinging the rein to his esquire, entered the chapel and strode towards them.

With a low bow he instantly addressed the astonished baron, saying, in a firm, sweet voice :—

“ I come, sir knight, in the name of my father, the good King Egbert, to demand in marriage the hand of your fair daughter. I am Wilfred, the eldest born and the heir to the throne. For thee,” he cried, turning fiercely to the bridegroom, “ did I not fear to stain my sword with thy false blood, I would hack thy spurs from thine heels, and hew thee in pieces, traitor and villain as thou art !”

Then the false prince bent his head, and said :—

“Hear me, Wilfred, for the memory of the olden time—let me die a soldier’s death! I have forfeited all claim even to this mercy, but thou art generous as thou art brave!—slay me thyself, or let me go free.”

Wilfred paused. The memory of the olden time came over his heart, and he said:—

“Go!—thou art free! Darken not longer these portals, but depart at once!”

The knight lifted not his head, but mounting his horse gallopped away. As he passed under the gateway, the animal reared, and, plunging furiously, refused to go forward. Frantic with passion, his rider dashed his iron heels into his flanks, but to no avail; the poor beast shook with a mortal terror; he rose straight on end, and falling heavily upon the knight, rolled completely over him. All rushed to his assistance; but it was too late; the hapless man was quite dead!

In a very short time, and to the great joy of all, Wilfred was married to the beautiful maiden; and every day they wandered into the wood, and sitting beside the sweet flower-message, were never weary of repeating all that had passed since they first met in that now sacred spot. One evening they were

watching the heavy thunder-clouds rolling towards them, when again the good fairy stood before Eleanor. Her face was very mournful; the large tears stood in her beautiful eyes; and her hands trembled as she passed them slowly over the young bride's fair brow. Thrice she did this, and with a deep sigh faded away! Once more Eleanor felt endued with strange sight; and after gazing fixedly for a few seconds, she said:—

“Wilfred, by the side of a black lake I see a castle with five towers, and from the gate a great array of horsemen are streaming, headed by an old man bearing in one hand a glittering sword, and in the other a banner, which is blood-red! Never have I seen such an array.”

Wilfred leaped to his feet; and for the first time his bride beheld a frown upon his brow.

“Eleanor,” he said, “the warrior thou hast seen is the father of the false knight. He comes to avenge his son. We must away to the home I have told thee of—to my castle in the bright river. No force have I to meet him here, for his army is ten thousand strong, and his wife is the daughter of a powerful spirit of the air.”

So they hastened back ; and summoning his little band, Wilfred and his bride bade a sad adieu to the baron and his wife, and started at full speed for the fastness. Scarcely had they reached it ere the enemy appeared in sight, but Wilfred, finding that the castle was well supplied, and trusting that his father would certainly come to his relief, determined to hold out to the last.

Many months passed thus, and two little boys were born to Eleanor, who forgot, in the joy of being a mother, the dangers which surrounded them. One morning, shortly after the birth of his children, Wilfred saw to his surprise that a great portion of the army had gone away in the night, leaving a number more than sufficient to cut off all supplies—and already their provision had begun to fail. Several sorties were made, but although the besieged fought desperately, they were always driven back without accomplishing anything beyond inflicting heavy losses upon the enemy.

A month wore heavily away. Famine, and her sister—sickness, had begun to thin their ranks, when a great noise was heard, and from the battlements Wilfred saw that all the army had returned ; and

feeling sure that a general attack was preparing, he ordered the bridge to be cut away. As this was done, a loud laugh of derision was borne upon the air, and in a very short time the true cause of the enemy's exultation became evident. They had succeeded in diverting the course of the river. The water sunk with frightful rapidity; and by nightfall you might have walked dryshod through the bed of the stream.

The castle was instantly surrounded, and only the darkness saved them from an immediate attack. At midnight Wilfred summoned all his troops. His noble face was pale as death, but his lip was firm, and his voice trembled not. He spoke to them of victory in death—of the glory of falling faithful to the standard of their prince; he concealed not from them the certain destruction which awaited them; and told each and all they were free to depart and go over to the foe. Not a man stirred, but, loud and fierce, a shout of defiance, which made the beleaguers tremble, answered to his words!

As he ceased, a lurid smoke rose from the floor, and passing upwards, revealed, close at his side, the figure of a woman, deformed and hideous, with an

expression so malevolent that no one could look twice upon her face. She leaned upon the thigh-bone of a giant; and, waving her withered hand, said aloud:—

“I am Hilda, the mother of one who deceived thee, and would have robbed thee of thy bride. In the hour of his fall thou gavest to him—true knight as thou art—the chance of a soldier’s death, instead of the doom of a felon. Constrained by the strong spirit of my son, I come to pay ye back your generosity to him! Listen, therefore, and know that from these walls two only of ye shall go forth alive. Thou, Wilfred, and thou, Eleanor, art given over for twelve years to the power of my husband; and in return for thy goodness to my son, I will take charge of thy children. For eleven years they shall dwell upon this rock—wanting nor food nor clothes. I will not guide them to good—I may not lead them to evil; yet thy fate shall depend on them! When the river, which now floweth strangely in its newly-made bed, shall be crossed by human feet, the waters shall return to their former course, thy bonds shall be broken, and thy castle shall stand again, girt by the glad river.”

She ceased—and striking the ground thrice with the bone upon which she leaned, it opened, and closed swiftly over the cradle in which the children were asleep. Eleanor threw herself upon her knees before the old woman, but she neither spoke to, or heeded her; but rising slowly, passed through the roof.

Stupified with horror, Wilfred and his wife gazed mournfully upon each other; but time even for sorrow was denied them—the blast of twenty trumpets rent the air, and the attack commenced. Deafening shouts mingled with the clash of steel; and for many hours the unequal fight was gallantly maintained. Inch by inch the ground, slippery with blood, was won; again and again the foe was driven back. Wilfred, like a directing spirit, seemed to be everywhere at the same time; and with such desperate courage did he fight, that there was not a soldier who would not have died a thousand deaths to save him!

But at last numbers prevailed; all save six of the little band were slain, and these, standing back to back, and forming a circle around the terrified Eleanor, prepared to sell their lives dearly! One by one they were cleft down; and at last, left alone, his sword shivered to the hilt, weary of slaughter, Wilfred

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wound his arm around his wife's waist and called upon the soldiers to slay them. They either did not hear, or would not heed him; they were torn rudely apart, bound hand and foot, and carried in triumph to the victor's tent, whence they were transported to a distant fort, and confined in separate dungeons. For five days the beautiful castle was given up to lawless plunder, and then fired at every point, and razed to the ground.

When all were departed, Hilda, true to her word built upon the rock a strange little dwelling, and there, in the form of an old woman, she lived with the two children. Wilfred and Herman—thus they had been named—grew every day more and more engaging; but Hilda took but little heed of them, seeing only that they never wanted for food, and that their clothes were always ready for them when they awoke in the morning.

The children were very grateful to her, and were so good and obedient, that if she had possessed a heart at all, they must have won it. Never for one instant did they hesitate to do her bidding, although very frequently her commands were harsh and

very difficult to perform. But although they were thus obedient, it was quite evident that they did not love her at all; and, indeed, it would have been very strange if they had, for she took no pains to make them do so. If they looked up from their tasks suddenly, they often found her keen grey eye fixed upon them with anything but a loving expression; and saw her lips moving in a manner which, although they could not understand what she muttered, conveyed to their little minds a very painful impression.

All around their strange home in the river-bed, great rocks and stones of every imaginable variety of grotesque and terrible form arose—some quite bare, others partially covered with moss and lichens. A little to the right, between sunny banks, the river itself, swift as the flight of a bird, rushed ever upon its musical way; the trees, bending gracefully over it, made every breath of wind an excuse for kissing its glad waters; and its whole course was bordered with fragrant shrubs and sweet flowers. Swifter and swifter it became, until, about a quarter of a mile below Hilda's cottage, it dashed over the precipice, and fell a thousand feet upon the rocks beneath.

Day and night, year after year, with a noise as grand as the thunder of the skies—with a shock like a perpetual earthquake, in its grace and beauty, its majesty and strength, fell the proud river, unseen by all save the wandering shepherd, and the little children of whom I am telling you.

A strange and ever-growing charm did the river and the cascade possess for the latter. Sometimes they spent the whole day sitting side by side upon the sward, their little hands locked in each other's, their soft eyes full of joyful tears, gazing silently upon the clear water. Gradually, too, the mighty fall lost all its terror to them; and instead of watching it through the distant trees, they would creep near—so near indeed, that the wind carried the spray to their cheeks, which were soft as velvet, and smooth as the leaf of a lily. At length this became quite a passion with the children,—they looked upon it at day, they dreamed of it at night, and always talked themselves to sleep, wishing it were morning that they might go again to the flowery bank, or to the green knoll, whence they could see the crystal columns fall, and the bright mist arise from the troubled waters. They loved, too, the beautiful Iris-spirit, who came in

the sunlight, and slept, so gorgeously robed, upon the soft bosom of the silver spray.

The voice of the mighty waters was quite familiar to them, and they either heard, or fancied they heard, beneath the grandeur of its incessant roar, notes of sweet music giving wings to gentle words, and whispering, "Come and see!" Very soon they became wholly absorbed by this one idea; their tasks were neglected; the old woman left altogether alone; the rank weeds suffered to grow in their little gardens, and all forgotten, except that which daily exercised a stronger spell upon them.

One autumn evening they had sat all day so near to the waterfall that they were bathed in the spray. The moon rose at the same instant that the sun sunk in the west. They determined that they would stay out all night, and see if it was as beautiful by moonlight as when the sun was in the sky. Cautiously and slowly they crept down the side of the steep banks, and hiding themselves under the leaves of some immense dock plants, awaited the coming night.

Silently the stars came forth and took their places one by one in the blue vault—solemnly the

moon rose higher and higher in the heavens, and all around, except the ever-wakeful river, seemed to sleep! Wilfred drew Herman close to him, for it was cold, and the knoll was steep and slippery with the ever-falling spray. How lovely it all seemed, and clearer than ever the sweet voices were interwoven with the grand roar of the falling waters. They sat quite enchanted, and never gave even a thought to the poor old woman whom they had left alone.

As a distant clock struck twelve, Wilfred saw, close at his side, the long grass bent down just as if a train of people were passing over it; and he pointed silently to Herman the path along the side of the rock which the invisible feet had taken. Presently the grass rose again; but still they could see the track by the darker colour of the verdure, where the dew had been brushed away. Then, as if impelled by a single thought, the children rose, and stepped boldly upon the path they had seen made.

They had no sooner done so than two flowers, white as untrodden snow, lifted their heads, and in accents soft as the falling dew whispered, "It is not well—go not!" And the voice of their consciences,

yet unstained, fell with a strange power upon their hearts. They paused and looked sadly into each other's faces; but just then a beautiful fire-fly rose before them, and seemed to point out the way; and sweeter, softer, clearer than ever came the words, "Come and see!" from amidst the roar.

The temptation was too strong; so taking each other's hands they walked forward. Loud and angry they heard the voice of Hilda; and seeing upon the foam a gigantic shadow of the old woman, her hand raised in a threatening attitude, again they hesitated; but the fire-fly shone so brightly, and they were so afraid to go back to Hilda, that they determined to proceed. As they passed on, the white blossoms, which had lifted their heads in vain, faded suddenly; and with a wild laugh the shade of Hilda disappeared!

Guided by the fire-fly, they walked slowly on, and at length reached the steep side of the mountain over which the river fell, and saw, what they had not even dreamed of before, that between the water and the rock there was a broad space, quite level, green as an emerald, and soft as the down of a thistle. Presently they found themselves before

a majestic portico, cut in the solid stone, and veiled from the world by the fall. As they stood wonderingly before it, the brazen door opened, and two spirits, whose beautiful limbs were only half seen through robes of woven spray, motioned them to enter. A feeling of intense sadness came over their hearts, they knew not why; mournfully they looked into each other's face, and kissing each other tenderly, passed hand in hand beneath the portico!

Scarcely were they within its shadow ere the whole fabric vanished—the columns sunk into the earth, and in their places stood huge mis-shapen masses of slimy rock. The spirits became two loathsome imps, with the heads and wings of gigantic bats. Poor Wilfred and Herman trembled in every limb. They had only time to whisper to each other a few words of love and tenderness ere they were dragged apart by the evil spirits, and borne swiftly upward through the thick and suffocating air. As they were hurried out of the cavern into the long galleries which branched from either side, each heard his name sobbed forth, and each vowed in his little heart that he would never forget his brother.

When Wilfred, who was the elder, came to his senses, he found himself seated upon the green bank of the river. At first he was quite confused; all that had passed seemed only a terrible dream, and for a moment he fancied he must have fallen asleep watching the beloved river. Then he thought of Herman; and not seeing him, looked again at the water. To his surprise he saw that it was flowing the wrong way. Poor child! he could not make it out at all! But presently, raising his eyes, he saw his brother sitting very disconsolate upon the opposite bank; and felt, with a bitter pang, that the swift river divided them, perhaps for ever!

In vain they shouted and held out their arms to each other—not a word could they hear; and having spent the whole day in these fruitless attempts, they sunk down quite exhausted, and fell asleep. Towards the morning each of the children dreamed a strange dream, or rather vision, for they did not think they were asleep. A fairy, robed in pale azure-coloured garments, stood before each and said:—

“ Rise and go to the river. Ponder deeply upon what thou seest. If thou art thoughtful and wise,

bold and shrinkest not, thy hands, by the aid of the Spirit of the North, shall form bright bridges of crystal, which shall span the stream and give ye to each other, and to those who love ye. Beware, however—snatch not the prize ere thy work is done; or sorrow and trouble shall await ye.”

Having spoken these words in a low and solemn tone, the spirit disappeared.

When Wilfred awoke, morning was breaking in the east, and, seeing that his brother still slept, he thought, sadly puzzled, over his dream. But finding himself bitterly cold, and being very hungry, he got up, and running into the wood, looked around for some berries to eat. The earth was very hard, the grass crackled beneath his feet, and the long icicles hung from the trees. Soon he found what he sought; and gathering a great many, he tied half of them in a large leaf, and binding a stone to it with a long rush, tried with all his might to throw it across the stream to his brother, whom he could see just awakened and sitting quite disconsolate upon the opposite bank.

Alas! they fell into the middle of the river, and, drawn down by the stone, sunk suddenly to the

bottom ; but Herman saw what his brother tried to do, and kissed his hand lovingly. In a little time Herman went and tried to find Hilda, but neither the old woman nor the cottage could be discovered ; and after a weary search he returned to the river, where at least he could see his brother.

During his absence Wilfred sat upon the bank, thinking ever of his dream. Presently he saw a spider walking cautiously but boldly along a line, so fine he could scarcely see it, but which he perceived, as the insect walked on, extended quite across the river to the opposite side. Now Wilfred thought that with all his love for his brother, it was very hard that he could not do what a poor despised spider was able to accomplish.

As he was thus thinking, he observed that a long briar, which dipped itself with every breeze into the water, was covered quite thickly with ice, and that every moment it became stronger, and remembering the crystal arch of which the fairy had spoken, it entered his mind that he, too, might turn the frost to good account ; so he rose joyfully and went into the wood, and gathering a large gourd, scooped out the decayed inside, and as soon as he saw Herman

lie down to sleep, he began his work. Continually he poured water over the briar, and ere long it became quite solid, so that it would bear his little weight. All night he worked, and already the arch reached far over the river. When the moon sunk, quite tired and very cold, he lay down and slept.

The sun was already up when he awoke, and starting from the ground he ran to the river. What was his delight to find not only that his own arch had been very far advanced during his sleep, but that little Herman had understood what he would do, and had commenced a similar arch on the other side! The fact was, that the fairies, who were sailing about and paying visits to each other on the moonbeams, were so delighted with the courage and perseverance displayed by the little boy, that they had amused themselves until the sun arose in thus aiding the poor children in their work of love.

Another circumstance which surprised Wilfred very much was, that in the middle of the river, exactly in the spot where the berries had sunk, there stood a plant precisely like that from which he had gathered the fruit which he had thrown to his brother. It had but two branches, one of which

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came towards himself, while the other turned to Herman.

Very merrily they worked all day, and very rapidly did the bridge proceed ; so much so, indeed, that by the time the moon had risen, the arches approached so close that the brothers could hear each other speak quite distinctly. This encouraged them greatly ; and they plied so busily the empty gourds, that at midnight they could touch the points of each other's fingers. Then they were so delighted, that Wilfred forgot the fairy warning, and dying to embrace his brother, told Herman to give him his hand, and he would jump across. Herman did so, and with all his strength Wilfred leaped ; but, alas ! he fell short, and hung partly suspended by the ice bridge, and partly by his little brother, over the toiling waters. Then all the folly of his impatience came over him, and he wept bitterly.

In vain did Herman strive to drag him up, and at last, feeling he could hold on no longer, Wilfred withdrew his hand from his brother's, and fell into the cold dark water. With a loud cry of agony, Herman clasped his hands, raised his sweet eyes to heaven, and leaped into the stream. In a moment he was

by his brother's side, and, locked in each other's arms, the poor children were carried over the precipice, and fell into the troubled waters.

As they were hurried over the rock, a shrill and unearthly laugh broke upon the air; and the black shadow of Hilda, tossing her arms as if in triumph, was thrown by the moonlight upon the curtain of white mist. An instant after the children fell, there floated calmly forth from the midst of the turmoil, two wreaths of foam, white as the driven snow, linked one within the other. They passed over the second and smaller fall, and went swiftly down the bright river.

I will not tell you all the perils and adventures which the little foam-wreaths encountered on their way towards the sea. They were, as you will have guessed, the spirits of Wilfred and his brother, whom the genii of the cascade had, in this strange form, rescued from death. Sometimes all was bright—the sun shone; and as they floated silently over the blue waters, the swan even envied their whiteness. At other times it was very sad; they passed under great bridges, and through vast cities; and were in perpetual terror that they should be either

destroyed, or at least separated. But they were always fortunate, and after a thousand narrow escapes, found themselves, to their great joy, within sight of the sea. Now, indeed, their troubles seemed quite ended, for they thought it looked so large they could float for ever over it without danger.

Presently they found themselves, they knew not why, quite still ; and being tired with so long wandering, they fell fast asleep under the shade of some tall rushes, not knowing that they would be left upon the beach when the tide fell. At noon the sun came out very brightly, and his rays beat so hotly upon the little foam-wreaths, which had been left upon the shore, that in a very few minutes they were turned into vapour, and rose into the soft air two purple clouds. When their spirits awoke, great was their delight to find themselves borne by the breeze, odorous with the breath of a thousand fragrant flowers, over the beautiful earth, passing by a succession of glorious things, and seeing every day some new wonder.

It was now summer ; and sometimes, when the sun was very hot, they were quite frightened lest they should lose each other, so small did they become ;

but they hid themselves under the shadow of a larger cloud, and soon were restored to their former size. When night came, and it was cold, they felt inclined to weep, but each comforted the other, and they did not. At last, one glorious summer night, after an intensely hot day, the earth seemed quite exhausted, the flowers drooped, the leaves of the trees rustled sadly, and all nature sent forth from her bosom a prayer for rain. Now, the clouds had been gorgeously robed by the setting sun, and were still assembled, like blood-red banners, in the sky, when the voice of the Great Spirit bade the north wind blow; and the clouds wept to feel the bitter cold, and fell in soft rain upon the earth, and refreshed it.

Now, at the moment that this happened, the little cloud-brothers were floating peaceably side by side, leaning lovingly against each other, and wondering at the lovely colours which the sun had given them; and well it was for them that it was so, for as the north wind, bearing the message of the Great Spirit, touched them, they too became soft rain, and fell into the open cup of a great white lily which grew in the palace-garden of a good and powerful fairy.

They had not been there very long, before the

fairy herself came into the garden, to look for dew-drops, which she needed to enable her to make a potent charm against the devices of a neighbouring baron, who, incited by his wife, a wicked spirit, had made war upon her. She looked into the flowers one by one, but finding they contained no dew, or not enough for her purpose, she passed on, and came at last to the lily, and looking into its deep bell, saw the two brothers sitting side by side, sparkling like diamonds; so she cut the flower very carefully, and going straight to her turret, began to utter charmed words, and to make strange signs with a white wand upon the ground. Then she took a cup, of pure crystal, poured into it a small quantity of clear red fluid, and, repeating all the time strange words, dropped the children, who trembled with terror as they fell into the cup. Greatly to her surprise, they did not mingle with the red liquid, so, placing the crystal vessel upon the ground, she took a golden wand, which had been purified in a white fire, and then dipped into the well of truth, and touched with it the dew-drops—one by one. As she did so, the little brothers were restored to their former shapes, and fell, clasping each other's hand, very timidly at the

fairy's feet ; and Wilfred, who was the spokesman, told her all they had undergone, and how they came to be in the deep cup of the great lily.

The fairy listened very attentively ; and when he had quite finished his tale, rose from her seat in a very excited manner, and laying a great book upon the ground, she drew around it a waving line, and opened it. The pages were spangled with bright stars, interspersed with strange characters, which the children could not understand at all. Presently she closed the volume, and, with a cry of joy, clasped the astonished boys to her heart ; and clapping her hands, a black page entered, bringing beautiful clothes, with which she immediately arrayed them.

So delighted were they that, not knowing what else to do, they fell sobbing into each other's arms. As soon as they were a little calmer, food was brought to them in golden dishes ; and when they had eaten, the fairy bade them sit down at her feet and listen.

She told them how wrongly they had done to leave Hilda, and to forget all their duties, in their love of the beautiful waterfall ; she told them, too, that if they had had patience to finish quite the

bridge of ice, not only would their punishments have ceased, but they would have had the happiness of releasing their father and mother from the power of a wicked baron, the husband of Hilda, who had held them confined in terrible dungeons for nearly twelve years.

Wilfred and Herman, when they heard this, wept very bitterly, and besought the fairy to tell them if they might even now do something to assist their parents. She bade them be comforted, and continued thus :—

“In the perils you have undergone, in your pure and unselfish love for each other, the Good Spirit sees a sufficient punishment and expiation of your fault; and in the great book which you saw me consult so earnestly, I have read wonderful and glad tidings. To-night, directed by the stars, I sought the ingredients of a potent spell, which I might use against this very baron, and his wife Hilda, who are my bitter enemies. All but one had I found, and accustomed as I am to read the flowers of the sky, I could not understand what this was. ‘Add to all this,’ said the starry tongues, ‘what thou shalt find in the flower that lifteth its head to heaven ;

touch it with thy rod of truth, and it shall become the instrument of certain victory.' In the cup of the great lily I found ye sitting—and ye know all that has since happened. Now, tell me—will ye lead my armies to-morrow to the battle? will ye slay my foes and your father's foes? Tell me, that I may prepare ye, as befits knights and a prince's sons, for the shock and the glory of the fight!"

Then the brothers rose, and, standing erect before the fairy, cried:—


"Oh! that it were morning, that we might go forth and fight! and that we might behold our father and mother!"

Proudly and joyfully the fairy kissed their brows; and, bidding them slumber soundly, threw over them a mystic veil, and left them. With the earliest dawn the fairy entered, bringing in her hand two robes of spotless white, in which she arrayed the brothers. Upon the breast of each was a silver star, which glistened brightly in the sun. Neither shield nor arms did she bestow upon them, but when they were mounted upon two white palfries, she placed in the hand of Herman a banner of snowy silk, and in that of Wilfred the golden wand which

had been dipped in the well of truth. Then she blessed them, and sent them forth at the head of her troops, who, when they saw the two children ride gallantly forward, their eyes flashing with life and hope, their fair brows flushed with joy, and their flaxen hair waving in the glad wind, raised a shout so long and so loud, that Wilfred and Eleanor heard it in their deep dungeons, and felt sure that assistance was at hand.

About noon the army of Hilda met them ! but as soon as they saw the child-leaders of the gallant band, they turned their horses' heads, and galloped away.

On—on—with loud shouts of victory, the fairy's army pressed, until they stood before the castle of their foes. Wilfred and Herman rode directly to the great gate, and, bidding the herald sound a challenge, demanded entrance. The challenge was answered by a flight of arrows, which fell harmless, though thick as autumn leaves, around the noble children, but which so incensed the troops, that, battering in the gate, they put the garrison to the sword, and in a few minutes were masters of the castle.



Then Wilfred and Herman dismounted and walked, carrying their white banner, and with the stars in their breast glittering with wonderful brightness, ascended the great stairs, and entered boldly the room in which Hilda and the baron sat, concocting evil, and so occupied in their wicked schemes as to be quite unconscious of all that had happened.

When the old woman saw the white banner of the children, she would have fled, but found herself rooted to the ground ; and the baron, paralysed with sudden terror, sunk back in his chair, awaiting what might come. Then Wilfred drew from his girdle the golden wand, and touched Hilda on the brow. In an instant, unable to resist the touch of truth, she became a vile and hideous serpent. Coiling herself up, she sprung fiercely at Wilfred ; but finding herself repelled each time, turned suddenly, and, darting her forked tongue at her husband's throat, wound herself round his body, and sunk with him into the earth.


Astonished, and not a little terrified at what they had seen, Wilfred and Herman turned wondering to each other, and were about to quit the chamber, in order to seek the dungeons in which their father and

Eleanor were confined, when the good fairy appeared before them. She was seated in her car of sea-foam, and drawn by four birds of Paradise. Her face was radiant with pleasure; and rising from her seat, she placed upon the children's brows chaplets of sweet flowers, and said:—

“Come with me, and I will bear you to the river. Not yet have human feet dared to cross it. For you is reserved the glory of thus finishing the good work you had begun.”

Wistfully they looked into each other's eyes; but remembering, and learning wisdom by the past, they seated themselves beside the fairy, and sped away. Over mountains and lakes—over great woods and verdant plains, they flew with wonderful rapidity; and ere the tear which, spite of himself, had forced its way from Herman's eye, as he left the castle in which his mother was, had quite dried, the birds paused suddenly upon the banks of the river, which they instantly recognised as their own.

Wilfred gazed in mute astonishment. The shrub with the red berries had grown into a tree, and from the centre two great branches extended quite across the river. Clapping his hands, he would have



attempted at once to pass it, but Herman took his hand, and whispered softly into his ear. Then Wilfred kissed his brother tenderly; and the two children knelt, and prayed earnestly to the Good Spirit to guide them safely across the swift river; and taking each other's hand, with trustful hearts they stepped upon the tree. To and fro it swayed, and very difficult it was to keep their footing; but they supported each other faithfully, and after many slips and narrow escapes, they reached in safety the opposite shore. No sooner had they touched the grass, than, falling upon their knees, they thanked the Good Spirit for leading them safely across. When they arose, they were carried in a moment by the fairy car to the rock in the midst of the river-bed.

How strangely they felt! All looked precisely as they had left it; the little dwelling in which they had lived with Hilda was still there, only the rocks were more covered with moss, and the little garden was a perfect wilderness of weeds. They had not been there many minutes when a loud noise attracted their attention, and looking to the west, they saw a wall, as it were, of solid crystal, rushing rapidly towards them. In a few minutes it reached

the rock ; and, dividing into two streams, the river flowed once more around them, as it did when they were born. At the same moment before them rose high walls, with beautiful windows and proud battlements ; and on every side noble-looking men were seen polishing their armour, and hurrying to and fro. Quite bewildered, Herman clung to his brother, and thus they stood for a few moments, until roused by a flourish of twenty brazen trumpets. All the soldiers jumped up, and hastily putting on their coats of mail, ranged themselves in a double line, and marched, four abreast, through a great gateway.

I wish I could describe properly to you the scene which met the eyes of the young brothers, as, following the line, they stood on the ramparts overlooking the broad river, the bridge, and the plain beyond ! From every turret of the castle, banners floated in the breeze—the walls were lined with soldiers, whose armour glittered in the setting sun : far as the eye could reach across the plain, extended a line of horsemen, and, just before the bridge, a group, which attracted all their attention, suddenly paused.

In a low car were seated two very old people

with silvery hair, and a most venerable appearance. The car was drawn by six white horses; and on either side, rode a knight and a lady, mounted upon noble steeds, gorgeously caparisoned, and pawing the ground, with arched necks and dilated nostrils, proud of their burdens. Around the group, gay ladies and gallant warriors were assembled; and in the air the good fairy sat, magnificently attired, in her sea-foam chariot, drawn by the birds of Paradise. As the cavalcade moved on, the children flew down the tower-steps, and reached the great gate just as their two palfries were led forth by their grooms. Gaily they leaped into their saddles; and as the portcullis rose, dashed across the bridge to welcome the comers, whom they knew in their hearts must be their father and mother. I will not attempt to describe the meeting, or to tell you how proudly Wilfred and Eleanor gazed upon the noble boys, as they rode side by side into the castle. If you had seen how beautiful they looked, how gallantly they sat their spirited palfries, or could have heard the silver accents of intense joy, with which they whispered the love that filled their blue eyes with tears, you would have thought the parents' admiration quite natural.

When they had all dismounted and were assembled in the great hall, restored to more than its former grandeur, the good fairy, who stood in the midst, said :—

“To thee, Wilfred, I give the wand of truth ; and to thee, Herman, the banner of innocence—each of which ye bore so well in my behalf. Keep them for your own, and each other’s use ; and while thus armed, ye fight side by side, the powers of evil shall not harm ye. To you, sir knight, and you, Eleanor, I give again the gift of former years—the priceless pearl of hope ; it is yours, and will be yours for ever, if you are wise, and guide well the noble spirits that are confided to your charge. To you, old man and gentle dame, in the happiness of others, I give you all this earth can hold for you ; and, now that my mission is fulfilled, I go, leaving the blessing of my master, the Good Spirit, upon ye all.”

Then the birds of Paradise fluttered their bright wings, impatient for their home, and they bore swiftly out of sight, one of the countless spirits who pass night and day ’twixt heaven and earth, doing the will of the Great Spirit.

CHRISTABEL; OR, NIGHT WANDERINGS WITH THE FAIRIES.

THROUGH the centre of a mighty city there runs a broad river, upon whose bosom float countless vessels, laden with the riches of the universe, and either securely anchored, or gliding over the surface impelled by the aged winds, or by that wondrous power which the genius of man has evoked from the fire and the water worlds. What tales of human woe, and bitter sufferings—what terrors of dark crime might be known if those banks could tell the records of their years! what spirit-lifting stories might they not reveal, of human goodness, human love, and that greatness of the soul,

which lays its hand upon the demon of despair, and rules it as a strong rider rules the unbroken steed ! Upon the edge of this river there stood, many years ago, a beautiful palace, the abode of a great family, whose ancestors had transmitted, from century to century, a stainless name, as well as vast possessions, to their descendants. For many years fortune had smiled upon this house ; sorrow had never dimmed the brows of its youth, and the aged scions had gone to their rest, time-honoured, and in peace with all the world.

At the moment I am about to tell you of, a shadow had fallen on the roof ; the noble inheritor, not less of the titles, the honours, the wealth, than of the virtues of his race, had died suddenly. In the pride and glory of his youth, he had gone forth to fight the battle of his native land, and had fallen in the very act of leading the gallant band he had raised for her defence, in a forlorn hope, against an impracticable breach. His bride, a soldier's daughter, had sent him forth, strong in the faith of youth ; and now she stood a widow—crushed by the mighty sorrow which the heart can know but once. In a few days after she received the fatal news, a

child would be born, the heir to vast estates and many honours ; but this event, which had been looked for with such happiness, had become almost a subject of dread to the unhappy girl.

It was midnight—silence reigned throughout the palace—and gradually the stir and bustle of the outer world had ceased. Unutterably sad, the Lady Constance walked to the open casement, and looked forth upon the sky. No words can tell her sorrow. With her hands clasped, her deep blue eyes raised meekly to heaven, she stood in the broad moonlight ; and with a terrible reality the fate which was, contrasted itself with that which might have been. She stood thus for a long time, until, borne distinctly to her ear upon the cold night wind, the wail of a child startled her ; and with a sense of nameless awe and anxiety for the fate of the babe as yet unborn, she knelt upon the marble floor, buried her face in her white hands, and prayed ; and the angels who wander ever through the air, bore the prayer at once to heaven, and it was written in the great book, and a seal of gold was set against it, that it might be granted.

Through the palace there was an unusual stir.

The servants moved quickly but noiselessly ; and up and down the great stairs, grave men and anxious ladies passed over the velvet carpets. The child, the heir of the great house, was born. I should have said the heiress, for it was a little girl. Many were vexed at this, and bitter words were spoken, and those who said them, strode angrily away. But others were quite glad, and thought only of the mother and her child.

Now, when the babe was three days old, the Lady Constance lay, supported by down pillows, listening to the quiet breathing of the tiny treasure at her side. A single wax light, shaded by a lovely china picture of the Virgin Mary and her sacred babe, shed a subdued and a peculiar light over the apartment. How beautiful it was ! Panels of white silk, bordered with cords of gold, and surrounded by wreaths of violets, with green leaves, formed the walls ; the curtains were of a pale rose colour, lined with sea-green silk, and held up by knots of flowers, carved in the whitest wood ; the chairs were all of maple ; and the carpet of thick velvet gave no sound to the step that moved upon it.

In a cradle of satin-wood and mother-of-pearl,

upon a down pillow, and curtained by the richest lace, slept the child ; and from that white and tiny face the mother's eyes moved not. Presently the Lady Constance fell asleep, but she soon awoke, and looking towards the cradle, saw, standing by its side, a figure robed from head to foot in white, with a star of gold upon her brow, and a golden girdle about her waist. Her eyes were soft and full of love, and her smile, as she bent over the sleeping child, was so unutterably sweet and beautiful, that Constance, could she have moved, would have thrown herself at the feet of the angel, but she could not stir ; and she saw the figure write in a golden tablet, with a pencil of diamonds, many words. When she had finished writing, she bent over the cradle, kissed softly the cheek of the infant, and, turning to Constance, said :—

“ For six years thy child must be left to the care of others ; her pride, her temper, her appetite, her childish will, all pampered and ministered to by those who heed not the future ; and, but that the virtues of thy husband's race, and many deeds of good which the world knows not of, have enlisted in the interests of all belonging to him and thee the

spirits of the air, dark and sad must be the fate of the child whose innocence is now the joy of thine heart. Hast thou faith, and wilt thou give over thy child to my charge? When thou seest aught which pains thy mother's heart, which makes thee anxious for its future, cast into the fire one of the three pearls I leave thee, and for twelve hours I will take charge of thine infant, and will strive to teach it the lesson thou wouldst wish. But remember well, three times only canst thou summon me. Call me not lightly, therefore; but when thou willest me to come, be bold and firm, waver not in thy faith, or the pearl thou castest into the fire will bring, not me, but the spirit of evil who is my antagonist. Take, then, these pearls, and the blessing I leave for thee and thy child with them."

Constance listened with a beating heart, and when the beautiful spirit had ceased speaking, she held forth her hand, and as the pearls fell one by one into its palm, seven spirits came and hovered over the cradle of the sleeping child. All were glorious to look upon, but very different one from the other; crowns of glory encompassed their fair brows, and in the hand of each was the emblem of the virtue of

which each possessed the gift. Constance lay upon her down bed, and with a joy no words can tell, watched the beautiful pageant with a smile which might have gladdened the angels who stand nearest to the throne of God. A colour, exquisite as the blush of a summer rose, tinged the cheek of the sweet infant, as it slept in its cradle of satin-wood and mother-of-pearl, and over it, poising a moment upon their snowy wings, the seven spirits of good joined their hands in a dome over its head, and on the air words of deep import were murmured in music, such as mortals never hear, sending to the heart of the glad mother a peace and joy which few are permitted to know in this world of sorrow. As the latest echo died away, the foremost spirit bent an instant, kissed the child's brow, and vanished in the air, one by one ; each of the seven left thus her benison, and melted away, and as each kiss was left upon that spotless brow, brighter, softer, more gloriously sweet, the smile played upon its lips, and the roseate blush deepened on its downy cheek. When they were gone, the fairy turned once more to Constance, and said :—

“ Perfect joy it is not ours to give ; and for thee, gentle lady, is reserved a sad lot. For the six years

of trial which thy child shall undergo, thou shalt not tread the earth; sickness shall lay its hand upon thy body, but the touch of health is in thy soul. Murmur not, but be patient; for while thy joy endures for ever, thy sorrow is but for a time. Remember well what I have said to thee. Summon me to thy side with full faith, and though I may be at the end of the earth, my spirit will come to thee; but beware lest thou waver when thou castest into the fire the pearl, for the evil spirits are ever wakeful, and once summoned, go not away except with pain and difficulty."

As she ceased, there rose, floating around her, clouds white as snow, and the spirit reclined herself upon them, and passed away through the silken panel; and behold, when the daylight came, Constance saw, painted upon the panel, a beautiful female figure, kneeling on a marble pavement, with her hands clasped upon her bosom, and her soft eyes raised lovingly to heaven; and upon her girdle was embroidered, in letters of gold, the word "Prayer." And murmuring softly her gratitude and deep love, the Lady Constance fell asleep, and dreamed of beneficent spirits guiding her beloved child to the

throne of God ; and of her warrior husband fighting amid the legions of heaven, in armour of polished gold, and with a sword of flame, against the evil genii of the nether world.

Time wore on, and Christabel was already five years old ; and, alas ! the prophecy of the good spirit had been terribly fulfilled. From that eventful night on which the pearls had been consigned to her care, the Lady Constance had never quitted the room in which her child was born ; sickness had indeed laid its finger upon her ; and during the five years which had passed, death had often seemed about to claim that gentle being for his own ; but with a “mild and patient spirit” she held “aloof her fate,” and, at the time of which I speak, her pale cheek was, perhaps, a shade less pale, and her thin transparent hand a little rounder than it had been since her husband’s death. The solace of her life, though, at the same time, the source of her intensest anxiety, was her beloved child ; and well, indeed, might she be proud of the lovely little being, who seemed, in one face and form, to concentrate all one has read, or dreamed, or seen, of loveliness on earth. Fair as

the lily when it spreads its earliest leaves to meet the morning sun, her brow might have served Phidias as a model; her eyes, deep blue, or rather of that purple which the violet assumes a moment ere it fades, shrouded with long dark lashes, and overarched by eyebrows of perfect form, though delicate colour, told a world of thought and power, of courage and energy, for good or ill; her small, delicate nose, exquisitely chiselled, and only not a straight line by the amount which gave a character to its refinement; the short, curled upper lip, and a mouth, which, in its changeful beauty of form, told every sensation of the youthful mind, formed altogether a face upon which the coldest could not gaze unmoved; and which haunted those whose hearts were warm like some half-gained but unsatisfied hope.

Well might the Lady Constance be proud of her child, and well, too, might she watch with intense anxiety the tale too truly told by those speaking features, and the frank confession of a spirit which was yet truthful as the steel which guides the wanderer across the trackless seas. Truly had the fairy spirit said she would be given over to the care of others. With a love which would have deemed

no trial hard which would have given scope to its devotion, she had been compelled to resign to others the dearest privileges of a mother, and to see the being to whose advantage she would gladly have sacrificed her whole existence, unwisely guided, and to mark, without the power of counteracting them, the seeds of evil sown in a heart which she knew had been so highly gifted at its awakening hour. What wonder that her child, waking or sleeping, was never absent from her mind—that, day and night, her every thought, her every dream, became imbued with the fate and prospects of that precious token of a love which, in its brief and suddenly extinguished bliss, might else have seemed as the vision of some glorious hour of mental exaltation? The Lady Christabel, reminded at every moment of her lofty position, her prospective wealth, her marvellous beauty, grew, ere long, proud and haughty—speaking hastily, and sometimes harshly, to the servants who surrounded her, and whose silent terror and servile submission to her most unjust caprices, only added, at every exhibition, to the evil whence it sprung. What wonder that, thus indulged, thwarted by no one, she became selfish and cold—that the springs of

her little heart, warm and gushing as they are in all children, should have been chilled and checked? What marvel that her temper, termed, by the flatterers around her, spirit and decision, became unequal and sometimes ungovernable; or that, never taught to obey, or to understand how lovely in the sight of Heaven and of men is the child's virtue, obedience, the poor little girl knew no will but her own?

For a long time the Lady Constance only suspected this. In her own refined and sensitive nature, in the winning softness of her smile, the melodious sweetness of her clear voice, as well as in the deep all-powerful love which she bore her child, there was an influence which at times drew forth all that was best and softest in the gifted but perverted nature of Christabel; but at last, just at the moment I have spoken of, when the faint flush of returning health illumined for the first time the marble cheek of the mother, the truth was suddenly revealed by a burst of uncontrollable passion. The unhappy Lady Constance buried her face in her hands, and felt, with a woe too terrible for tears, the full extent of the evil which had fallen upon her. When she raised her head, all trace of colour was

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gone ; and with a look, almost vacant from its intense misery, she gazed anxiously into her child's eyes. Not yet, however, was hope extinguished ; with a deep blush of burning shame, Christabel threw herself, sobbing passionately, into the arms of her mother, who, pressing her penitent child to her bosom, mingled with her bitter tears the burning drops flowing from her own disappointed heart.

From that hour the Lady Constance suffered not her child from her sight ; but, alas ! every day confirmed the dreadful conviction that evil had taken hold upon her young mind, and that the child, whom in her bright dreams she had looked upon as the embodiment of all the virtues with which she had seen her endowed, was selfish, proud, harsh, passionate, and disobedient.

One hope only remained to the unhappy mother ; the child's heart was warm, and, to herself, affectionate, and in many ways she was extremely sensitive. Day by day the Lady Constance gazed upon the pearls enshrined beneath a crystal dome ; and oftentimes she had nearly determined to summon to her aid the fairy donor, but she did not do so, partly from a half doubt which had taken possession of her

mind, and partly from fear that if the spirit would indeed listen to her summons, and come, the waywardness of her child might offend her.

The Lady Christabel was six years old. The morning, cloudless and beautiful, sent sunny messages to kiss her blue-veined lids, and awake the little maiden to joy and delight. As she turned round in her snowy bed, her eyes, as they wandered from spot to spot, fell ever upon some exquisite gift, some beautiful dress, some new toy, some richly-bound book, and for a little time she thought she must be dreaming. The curtains of her bed had been removed during her sleep, and replaced by others of the finest gauze, rose-tinted, and spangled with silver stars; they hung from a crescent moon, also of pure silver. The coverlid of her bed was all woven with flowers, so beautifully wrought, that Christabel thought they must be real; upon her toilet table, spread with damask of spotless white, stood golden Cupids, supporting between them a mirror of polished steel; while upon the table itself, made of ivory and silver, were arranged, with faultless taste, all that the most fastidious beauty could demand or dream of.

Alas! alas! when fully awakened, Christabel

thought not of the goodness, the love, and tenderness of those who had thus overwhelmed her with gifts so rare. She rose, and looking into the steel mirror, tossed her little head, and said, half aloud :—

“ At last I have things that are fit to be used—such as the Lady Christabel de Vere ought to have had long ago.”

Poor Lady Constance had risen that morning for the first time for six long years ; and now, with a heart full of tenderness and love, she had stolen to her child’s door, to see how she would be charmed with all that surrounded her. Unperceived by Christabel, and crushed by disappointment, she went back to her couch. Presently the bell rang so violently that the poor mother started ; and when the maiden, a lady of gentle birth, who attended upon Christabel, answered the summons, words harsh and angry fell upon her ear.

All day the wilful child distressed her mother ; and when the evening came, and all the children who were invited had arrived, looking so fresh and lovely, that you would have thought they had fed upon the dew, and lived only in the beams of the morning, the Lady Christabel, with her little face

flushed with pride, stood at the tall glass, and, radiant in beauty, walked, like a miniature Semiramis, to the ball-room, which, for the first time since her husband's death, the Lady Constance had ordered to be illuminated. Through every circumstance of that eventful evening the Lady Constance de Vere watched her child, and, alas ! every moment so confirmed her fears that that bright nature had been warped by flattery and evil example, that when at length, one by one, the little guests had departed, all pleased and happy, but all wondering at the strange and haughty conduct of their child-hostess, she determined, without more delay, to summon to her aid the good fairy.


With a beating heart she bade Christabel bring to her the precious casket. For the first time the wayward and spoiled beauty obeyed not her mother's voice ; and Constance, with a look of unutterable pain, raised herself with difficulty, and stepped towards the cabinet. In a moment the child was at her side ; and as she sunk back upon her couch, and looked at the flushed cheek and tearful eye of the lovely girl, the decision faded from her heart, and she remained, holding, irresolute, the pearl in her fingers, longing, but not daring to cast it into the flame.

Still she wavered. The memory of the past evening, of all the untamed pride, the selfish disregard of others, the intractable spirit she had witnessed, passed over her mind ; and gathering a momentary strength from the painful remembrance, she dropped, rather than cast, the pearl into the fire. In a moment it was half consumed ; the bright flames fell suddenly ; and between herself and her child a veil of shifting mist arose. And the expression of the face of each seemed changed ; and the child and the mother gazed strangely upon each other, and felt a mutual sense of sadness and distrust take possession of their minds. Gradually the mist assumed a form, uncertain and changing, but dark and gloomy, and ever varying.

The fairy's warning rose vividly to the memory of Constance, and she was about to cast another pearl into the fire, when Christabel said, angrily :—" Why, mother, do you throw away such lovely jewels ? give them to me." The Lady Constance, with a deep and conscious blush, not daring to look at her child, and casting hurriedly the second pearl into the now reviving flame, said :—" Heed them not, my child ; they are not real ; to-morrow thou shalt

have others brighter far than these." A sigh, so deep and sad, and which came so clearly from the kneeling figure upon the silken panel that both started, was heard. A pale grey vapour rose from the wide grate, and a figure, deformed and horrible, crouched abjectly at the feet of the unhappy mother. Fascinated with terror, she gazed upon him; his eye, deep set in an almost fleshless skull, glaring with sinister and fiendish expression, followed her every movement, as the hungry falcon pursues the fated bird. By his side crawled a serpent, which seemed in some strange manner to form a part of, and yet to be separate from, his hideous form; its crest was raised, and its gaze, eager and vivid as the flash of lightning, was fixed upon the astounded Christabel, who sat motionless, trembling in every limb.

To the dismay of the unfortunate Constance, who could not withdraw her eyes from the bi-form monster, she perceived that, without any apparent motion, the serpent seemed ever to approach nearer and nearer to the child. Maddened with fear, and reproaching herself bitterly for the want of energy and resolution which she had displayed, and which she now felt had caused all this trouble, thus verifying the prophecy



of her fairy monitor, Constance, by a sudden and desperate effort, wrested her eyes from the figure before her, and, in frantic despair, raised them piteously to heaven.

Again, distinctly upon her ear, the sigh of the kneeling saint was borne, and, looking towards the panel she saw, or fancied that she saw, the lips parted as if in prayer. As, driven by the tempest winds, the dark clouds hurry over the sky, so wild and terrible thoughts swept over her soul, and as, amid the thickness of the storm, the moonbeams between the dense masses shed glory and light upon the earth, so returned the sweet thoughts, as a beam of light fell upon the mind of the bewildered lady. With a wild cry of hope and joy, she flung herself upon her knees beside the figure, and, burying her face in her hands, prayed earnestly and long. When she arose, the veil had vanished, the horrible figure which her mind, cleared and purified by prayer, now recognised as the embodiment of the falsehood she had told her child, gradually diminished, as she looked sternly and bravely upon it ; and as, firm in her reawakened faith, she stepped boldly forwards, with a brief but passionate cry for aid from Heaven, she flung the

third pearl into the fire. As it fell, the flames rose high and bright, a perfume sweeter than the breath of morning diffused itself over the room, a light, indescribably soft yet brilliant, made every object distinctly visible, and shed over all a warm and roseate glow ; sounds of music, such as make the seraphs cease their song, that they may listen in wrapt silence to the echo of their own melody, floated upon the air, and a vision more lovely than an eastern dream appeared.

Resting upon silver clouds, a car, formed of long graceful leaves, and arched over by drooping lilies, was borne forward ; two winged cherubs supporting and guiding it. One held in his rosy finger a crystal cup, from which he poured dew upon the weary flowers, and peace upon the broken hearts : the second, with reins of spiders' webs, and a whip formed of a bulrush, guided two magnificent moths ; while around the car roses and sweet flowers were scattered on the clouds. As the lovely pageant paused, a fairy, who sat reclining upon cushions made of the down of butterflies' wings, rose, and, stepping from her chariot, approached them.

In mute astonishment, not unmixed with awe,

Christabel gazed upon the beautiful stranger, and raising the golden border of her snowy robe, pressed it to her lips. The fairy looked down upon her, and smiled graciously; then, turning to the Lady Constance, she said:—

“Happy art thou that the third trial failed not; for had it done so, thou and thy child would have been given over to the power of the evil demons of doubt and falsehood, to whom thy wavering thought and weak untruth, gave admission, where they should never have been seen. Fear not now, however, for thou art pardoned, and thy child’s fate is in the hands of those who loved her father too well to leave her without aid to battle against the perils which encompass her. For twelve hours she is mine, and when I bring her back to your feet, the evil of her habits will have given way to the glory of the bright nature which God has given her.”


With a joy and thankfulness too deep for words, Constance bowed her head; and, bending her soft eyes once more upon the still kneeling child, the spirit said:—

“Wilt thou come with me, little maiden, that thou mayest learn to know right from wrong, and

see the mystery and the beauty of a child's heart? To-night, when the sun sinks in the west, I will come and bear thee with me to scenes which thy heart dreams not of, but which will teach thee to value rightly the bountiful fate which has placed thee where thou art."

With these words the pageant vanished, and, behold ! the kneeling figure was more beautiful than ever ; the eye upturned, and the cheek flushed with a divine fire, and the golden letters glittered like diamonds in the midday sun.

All day the mother and her child sat hand in hand, thinking too intently to speak much, and impatient for the fairy visit. Hope and satisfaction shed new strength into the frame of the Lady Constance, and Christabel, as she sat at her mother's feet, saw with deep joy that again the colour had come to her lips and tinted her pale cheek. The hour of sunset approached, and as the last ray gilded the distant spires the fairy came ; and having kissed her mother very tenderly, Christabel stepped into the wonderful car, and was borne away through the open casement.

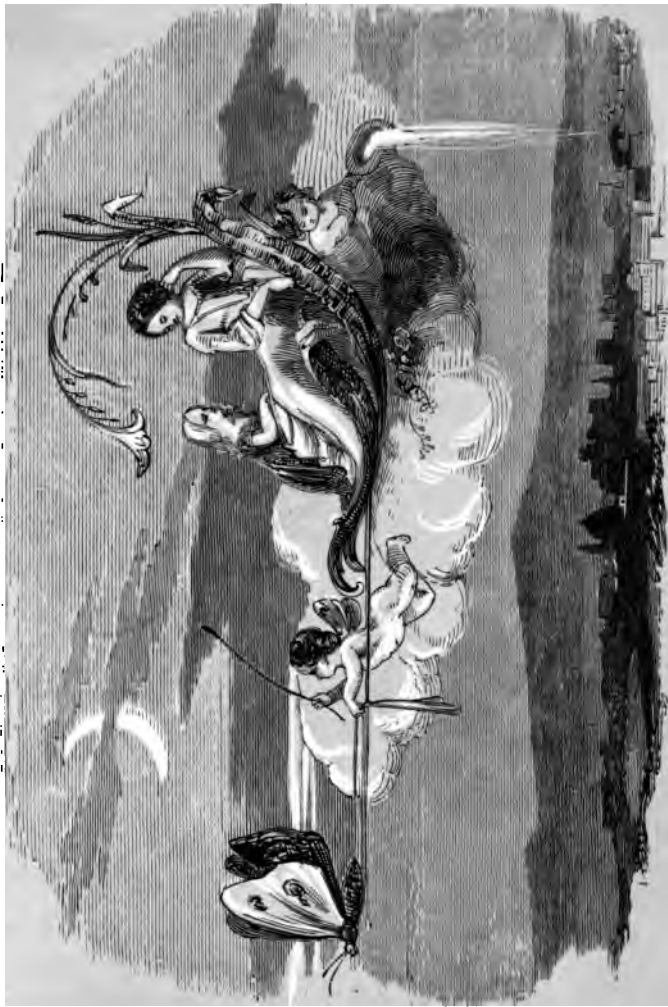


High in the air the bright moths bore the car, and in mute astonishment and delight the favoured Christabel felt the air purer than that which mortals breath, and redolent with fragrant perfumes upon her cheek. Slowly the dim twilight spread his veil over the earth, and when they again descended, night had wrapt in sleep the greater portion of the inhabitants of the world.

Kneeling at the fairy's feet, the child listened to the music-murmurs of her voice, and deep in her young heart sank the lessons of justice and truth she taught; and which were to be, ere long, enforced by the scenes they were about to witness. Presently the moon rose, and its silvery beams fell upon a thronged and mighty city, hushed in slumber. As they descended rapidly, the fairy whispered to Christabel, that whatever she saw, she was to utter no sound, as they would be invisible; and her so doing, might alarm and interrupt those by whom she might be surrounded. She promised to obey.

Then the fairy touched her with her wand, and taking her hand, Christabel felt a strange change taking place; she seemed to lose all consciousness of where she was; she looked, but could not see even






“Presently the moon arose, and its beams fell upon a thronged and mighty city hushed in slumbers.”

the fairy, nor were the moths or the flower-car visible; and had she not felt her hand gently pressed, she would have been quite terrified.

In an instant, she stood, she knew not how, in a low dark room, such as she had never seen before. The roof was slanting, the great beams, rough and unpainted, were covered with cobwebs and damp vegetation; through the shattered slates of the roof the night wind whistled drearily; of the little broken window, one pane was wholly gone, and missing parts of the others were filled with straw. The walls had once been plastered, but time and damp had caused the covering to fall away; and in many parts the laths were quite bare. No carpet covered the floor, but although worm-eaten, worn, and uneven, it looked clean, and comparatively nice.

In a corner of this wretched room, upon a low miserable pallet of straw, sheltered from the cold air by a piece of matting, and covered with a tattered rug, lay a young and delicate woman, who, faded and mournful as she looked, must once have been very lovely. Her small hands, so transparently white that every vein was visible, lay crossed upon her breast. Poor thing! she was too weak to clasp



them, and her eyes were raised with an expression of divine content and resignation.

By her side, upon a little stool, sat a child who might be ten years old, and by the light of a half-burned rushlight, she read, in a voice of tearful melody, holy words from a large book upon her knee. As she ceased, she closed the volume, and, kneeling beside her mother, clasped her thin hands between her own and prayed. Then she arose, and taking a vial, poured some of its contents into a broken cup, and gave it to the suffering woman, who turned her eyes towards her with an expression of such deep and devoted love, that the tears flowed silently over the cheeks of the invisible child.

With tenderest care the little maiden smoothed her mother's pillow, and raised the long and beautiful hair which had fallen down; and then, fancying that she slept, she went to a little cupboard, and taking from it a few clothes which she possessed, she opened the door stealthily, and flew down stairs. Swifter than thought, the fairy and Christabel followed her, and saw her presently pause before a baker's shop. Poor child! she had not tasted food that day; but with a deep sigh she passed on. Presently she came

to a hovel, around the doors of which a number of ruffianly-looking men were assembled. For a moment, the maiden paused, alarmed by the rude looks and the cruel words of the bad men, but, holding her little bundle tight under her arm, she went in.

In a dark corner of the hovel sat a little old man, bent with age—dirty beyond all description. His long white beard, matted and thick, hung to his girdle, his small, keen eyes wandered restlessly, and his hand clenched, with a savage joy, a bunch of keys. He sat upon an iron chest, looking the very picture of misery and vice.


As the little girl approached him meekly, trembling so violently that she could scarcely walk, he hurriedly hid the keys in his pocket, and turned sharply towards her. Summoning all her courage, the little maiden advanced, and said :—

“ Oh ! if you please, sir, will you give me money, that I may buy something for my poor mother, who is dying ? ”

Then the old miser laughed, and said :—

“ What hast thou in thy bundle ? ”

So she spread before him all her store of little



clothes; and the eyes of the old man sparkled, for he saw a jewel, which the fairy had dropped among them, and hastily clutching up the clothes, he bade the child go to the further end of the room. Then carefully locking and barring the door, he glanced stealthily around, and, in a fear and trepidation, which made his withered hands shake like an aspen, he took from the iron chest a silver coin, and pressing the little bundle of clothes under the half-open lid, locked it carefully, and gave the coin to the happy child.

With a smile, bright as that of the pardoned peri, she bounded, regardless of her fatigue, or of the cutting cold, towards her home. Ever beside her Christabel and the good spirit followed. She paused suddenly, at the corner of a street, and asked a woman, who kept a little stall, to sell her some grapes. The woman, who looked half dead with the cold, weighed out the fruit; but when she proffered the silver coin in payment, looked suspiciously at the child, and threw the money back, saying it was bad.

The poor little girl let fall the grapes, and, sobbing violently, cried:—"Oh, my mother! my poor mother!" and sank down upon the pavement.

The fruit-seller looked into her poor face, and, true to a better and brighter nature, said:—

“Take the grapes; and may God forgive thee if thou meanest to deceive me!”

The poor child hurriedly told her tale; and, snatching up the grapes, flew homewards—for the clock struck eleven, and she felt she had already been too long absent. So they all returned to the garret.

As they entered, the rushlight was nearly exhausted. The dying woman was awake, and was gazing, with a fixed and earnest expression, towards the door. As the child entered, a ray of divine light passed over her face, and raising her wan hand, she beckoned her to come near. As her eye fell upon her mother's face, the smile faded from her lip, the flush died upon her cheek, and with an expression of intense agony, she flew to the side of the wretched pallet, and with a terrible presentiment of evil, hung over the pillow.

For some moments, neither uttered a word; but after several ineffectual attempts, the mother spoke, and, broken and interrupted, the following words sank deep into the heart of Christabel:—

“Farewell, my sweet child! My hour, so long

expected, is come at last. That God will hear my prayer, and reward thee for all thy tender love and gentle care of thy poor sick mother, I do not doubt ; and when I am gone, it will solace thy bereaved heart to feel, that never, since the hour of thy birth, hast thou added one shade to the sorrow which brings me thus early to the grave. That in thy secret heart thou knowest this, is my comfort, at this hour. And God, who has seen all thy obedience, thy disregard of thyself, thy watchful love, will not leave thee alone nor unsupported. Kiss me, Lina, and let a mother's dying blessing fall like dew upon thine heart !”

In an agony of uncontrollable grief, the poor child flung herself upon her mother's bed ; but remembering how precious were those latest moments she looked up. Again the dying woman tried to speak. She could not. For a few minutes there was an awful pause. A smile of seraphic sweetness played over the pale lips, the closed eyes opened, and gazed upwards, with an expression which seemed a prescience of heaven, and raising herself up, her lips parted, and they said the words, “ Follow me !”

It was over. Heavily she fell back ; and the

hapless Lina threw herself passionately upon the body.

With a breaking heart, Christabel found herself once more seated in the wondrous car, and speeding over the city. The fairy said but few words, for she perceived that the child at her side had been strangely affected by all she had seen ; only when Christabel had a little recovered, she told her the true use she ought to make of the lesson which had been given to her.

Weeping bitterly, she threw herself at the feet of the fairy, and confessed all her disobedience and pride—all her selfishness and evil temper, and poured out her little heart so frankly and so truthfully, that the good fairy kissed her tenderly, and passing her hands gently over her face, she fell so fast asleep, that she felt and knew nothing, until she awoke the following morning, in her own pretty room.

As she saw all the comfort and luxury by which she was surrounded, the miserable chamber in which she had been during the night presented itself vividly to her mind. She blushed deeply as she remembered all her folly and haughty conduct the day before ;

and she arose, and kneeling meekly down, said her little prayers, and rang gently her silver bell.

Her attendant, who came, was surprised and enchanted when Christabel, taking her hand, and looking into her face, said :—

“I pray you to forgive me, and to believe that I will never be rude or unkind to you, dear lady, and that I am very sorry for all the pain I have so often given you.”

Then she dressed herself, and going into the garden, gathered the sweetest flowers she could find, and went with a beating heart into her mother's room.

The Lady Constance, who had passed a night of intense anxiety, although full of hope, was already upon her sofa, and as the child entered rose to meet her. Christabel threw herself at her feet, and clasping her knees, besought her forgiveness.


“Oh, my sweet mother!” she sobbed, passionately, “pardon me, pardon me—for I am very unhappy. I cannot bear to think what pain I have given thee. Oh! mother, mother! if thou hadst left me, and gone to heaven, I should not have deserved to follow thee; but, oh! forgive me!

and I will try each day to atone to thee for the past."

Proudly the mother kissed that radiant brow—and sweetly did the hours pass away. As Christabel told her mother all she had seen when wandering with the good spirit—as she recalled all the goodness and sweetness of the little maiden, it was so painfully contrasted with her own consciousness of all her wayward and undutiful behaviour, that often she was obliged to leave off speaking, choked with tears.

Sunset came at length; and once more the glorious pageant appeared—more radiant, more beautiful than before. Kissing her now happy mother, she stepped lightly into the car; and the little cherub plied his bulrush whip, and loosening the cobweb reins, the magnificent moths spread their wings. And all the glorious flowers rejoiced in the abundant dew which was poured upon the earth.

With the speed of light, the car traversed the air; and presently, as Christabel looked over the side, she saw that the land was no longer under them, and with delight and wonder she clapped her hands.



Across the sea—for such it was beneath them—was a broad band of molten gold, directly above which they seemed to pass ; the stars were brilliantly clear ; and as they skimmed rapidly through the air, the fairy exchanged pleasant greetings with many other spirits whom they met or passed, all bearing messages of good, or speeding upon errands of peace and comfort to the weary hearts and mournful homes, for whose deep sighs and bitter sadness they brought balm on the wings of the wandering winds.

On—ever on—they flew, over vast tracts of country, over lakes and rivers, boundless masses of black rocks, and high above the snowy peaks of the mountains, where the foot of man has never ventured, and where the eagle sits, in his solitary glory, gazing with unshrouded eye upon the sun.

After traversing for a long time a mighty and continuous range of mountains, a scene of surpassing beauty was spread out before them. An enormous plain, rich and glowing with the coming harvest, and watered by two wandering rivers, surrounded a castle, built upon a strangely-formed mass of rock. As they approached, the fairy whispered to Christabel words which made her little heart leap

with strange joy, and sent the bright colour into her cheeks. Rapidly the car descended ; and ere many seconds had passed, the cherub-driver drew the reins tight. The moths, suddenly checked, fluttered their wings with anger—all the dew was spilt at once from the crystal cup—the lily shook, and the tiny leaves bent forward so suddenly, that they seemed as if they would never get steady again—and they were upon the roof of the castle, which a moment before had seemed so distant.

The fairy alighted from her car ; and as they walked to the central tower, she waved her hand, and the sentinels fell fast asleep. Opening the lattice, and taking Christabel's hand, she entered, and throwing the guard at the entrance of the dungeon into sound slumber, she took the keys from his side, and opened the ponderous gate.

Seated at a table, writing by the light of a single lamp, they beheld a man in the pride of youth ; his cheek was pale, and his eye was deep sunk—but it flashed with hope ; and as the fairy entered, he rose suddenly, and said :—

“ Welcome, gentle strangers ! Long have I awaited, but vainly, to behold you here—for many months

have rolled away since this happiness was first promised to me."

Then the fairy led forward the blushing Christabel, and said :—

" Behold thy child ! To this moment the fates have not willed that ye should meet—for a union of perfect joy could alone repay you, Lord Conrad, and the beautiful Lady Constance, for all the misery ye have undergone."

Deeply the child blushed, and the tears stood in her bright eyes, as she felt that she had thus delayed the happy re-union of her father and mother. The Lord Conrad pressed Christabel to his heart, and would have spent much time in admiring her, but the good fairy reminded him that they had a long journey to make. He started up, therefore ; and in a few minutes all were speeding back to the great city. As they flew along, the Lord Conrad told his child how, having been desperately wounded on the battle-field, he had long been thought to be dead, and how he had only regained consciousness to be thrown into a dungeon, whence, it was told him, he should never escape until perfect peace was restored to his home.

As the faint grey light of morning glimmered in the east, they passed through the casement into the ante-room of the palace. Then the fairy bade them rest in peace, and sleep—for there must elapse yet some hours before they could see the Lady Constance. So she passed her hand slowly over their faces, and a deep sleep came over them both.

The sun was high in the heavens the following morning ere the Lady Constance awoke. As she did so, she could not comprehend the change which had taken place, and for some minutes she lay quite still, in the fear of breaking the web of some glorious dream. All sense of sickness or illness, of weakness or sadness, seemed to have departed. She thought the bliss and joy of early youth had returned ; and for a short space after she knew that she was awake, she remained in the calm and still enjoyment of the happiness which was hers.

Suddenly she arose, and, guided by some powerful impulse, robed herself hastily, and passed into the ante-room. What was her astonishment and delight, when, clasped in the arms of her noble husband, she beheld her child, sleeping calmly, and looking more lovely than words can tell. With a

cry of joy, she rushed to the couch, as Conrad, springing to his feet, caught her to his heart.

Such joys as these, it is not given to me to describe ; and I shall only tell you, my dear children, that Christabel never forgot the lesson she had learnt in her night wanderings with the beautiful fairy.

THE END.

